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HITLER AND THE DEFEAT OF 1918:

A STUDY OF SPEECHES AND TACTICS 1918-1945



by
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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTERS OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1971

ABSTRACT

Although the National Socialists always considered themselves the legitimate heirs of the German tradition rarely did the assumptions on which Hitler's policies were founded reveal even a rudimentary knowledge of what preceded the twentieth century. The nation which Hitler claimed for his own was the Germany of World War I. In 1918 military defeat and internal collapse threatened the core of what was and remained the focal point of Hitler's life: the Kriegserlebnis. In subsequent years the real or imaginary "lessons" of the war experience became the touchstone of his political beliefs and tactics. He, like many other Germans, suffered from a fundamental inability to come to terms with 1918 or the factors which led to the collapse. Therefore, the war was carried home from the trenches into the streets of Bavaria, an "internal enemy" replaced the foreign foe, and the defeat turned into a weapon for use against those courageous enough to rescue what could still be rescued.

The following essay is neither an analysis of the defeat as such nor a review of Hitler's political beginnings. It seeks instead to examine the impact which Hitler's interpretation of the German collapse in 1918 had on the style and policies of the NSDAP before and after the seizure of power. How did Hitler's explanation of the end of World War I fit into his planned foreign policy? What was his position on the Dolchstoßlegende or Kriegsschuldfrage? How

was the National Socialist reaction to the events of 1918 different from that of the German Nationals and other conservatives? Finally, in what respect was Germany's defeat of 1918 a shaping force in Hitler's political and military strategy after 1933?



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to Prof. Hillgruber and his colleague, Prof. Ernst Nolte, whose lectures and seminars at Philipps Universität in Marburg, West Germany, kindled my interest in modern German history.

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Der Fanatismus ist nämlich die einzige
"Willensstärke", zu der auch die Schwachen
und Unsichern gebracht werden können, als
eine Art Hypnotisierung des ganzen sinn-
lich-intellektuellen Systems zugunsten
der überreichlichen Ernährung (Hypertro-
phie) eines einzelnen Gesichts- und Gefühls-
punktes, der nunmehr dominiert--der Christ
heisst ihn seinen Glauben. Wo ein Mensch
zu der Grundüberzeugung kommt, dass ihm
befohlen werden muss, wird er "gläubig"....

- Friedrich Nietzsche
(Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft)

Introduction

Every attempt to deal with Adolf Hitler and National Socialism begins with one form or another of the question, "how did it come about"? Ralf Dahrendorf has defined the "German Question" negatively: "why is it that so few in Germany embraced the principle of liberal democracy?"¹ The search for the origins of National Socialism has led historians back to the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm II, Bismarck, 1948, the Wars of Liberation, Rousseau and Romanticism, Frederick the Great, the Thirty Years War, and even Luther. Intellectual, social, political, institutional and religious precursors are turning up left, right and center, in each era. These findings are then either treated as possible signs by the cautious or as points of no return by determinists. A.J.P. Taylor, for example, has categorically stated that his study of German history "shows that it was no more a mistake for the German people to end up with Hitler than it is an accident when a river flows into the sea."² At the other extreme are those who maintain that Hitler's star was already sinking when Hindenburg made him Chancellor. There was, they believe, nothing inevitable about Hitler's seizure of power.³

There are, to be sure, forces found in German history which tend in the direction of making a totalitarian regime possible. The question of why precisely these tendencies became dominant in the 20th century, nevertheless, remains. Hitler and his ideological mentors certainly were strongly influenced by the völkisch-pan-German ideas

and programs of the late 19th and early 20th century. That, however, does not account for the massive support which the NSDAP gained in the post-war period. Those pre-war, anti-Semitic-völkisch circles remained relatively small and uninfluential. The great majority of those who eventually rallied around the swastika stood outside of that tradition, either because they had always lived on the fringes of Imperial Germany's intellectual and social life, or because they were so young that the war and the revolution had become the shaping forces in their lives.⁴ The narrow following which pre-war and early Weimar pan-German and völkisch movements enjoyed lends support to the assertion that the social conditions of the post-1914 period were more decisive in the rise of National Socialism than were related forerunners. Only after the First World War had shaken the foundations of the German social and political structure did that spiritual vacuum emerge which Hitler knew how to fill better than anyone else.⁵

Adolf Hitler began his career with a full appreciation of the post-war situation. He rejected the newly established parliamentary democracy but, in contrast to the other right-wing party leaders, also held Imperial Germany responsible for what had transpired. Moreover, he made full use of the Weimar "system" to mobilize support against it by appealing to those hardest hit by the economic and social dislocations resulting from the war. In this way the Weimar Republic was made to look responsible for what the Imperial Regime had brought upon the nation. Those who suffered most severely

from the effects of the war economy, i.e., peasants, small shopkeepers, and those engaged in the traditional crafts, were especially susceptible to NSDAP propaganda. They had hitherto belonged to the more or less politically virgin segment of society, either because class differences divided them from the traditional parties, or because parties, like Independent Social Democrats or the Social Democrats, with whom they might otherwise have identified, basically supported organized labour.⁶

In addition, the shocking experiences of World War I created in the minds of millions of German men a new political awareness. The revolution and inflation completed that process of political radicalization. Ernst von Salomon has spoken for that generation:

Wir fanden uns fernab der Welt der bürgerlichen Normen, keines Lohnes, keines Zieles uns bewusst, Uns war mehr zerbrochen als die Werte, die wir alle in der Hand gehalten. Uns brach die Kruste auch, die uns gefangenhielt...Ein Bund von Kriegern waren wir, durchtränkt mit aller Leidenschaft der Welt, toll im Begehren, jauchzend im Ja und Nein.⁷

At the same time that these elements became aware of their own strength they lost their confidence in traditional, political and social values. The brutality of war had shaken this confidence and the helplessness of Imperial Germany in the face of economic disorder, military defeat and political upheaval shattered it. Prolonged exposure to extreme propaganda and death had instilled in them a peculiarly passionate nationalism. National Socialism appealed to embittered losers. The NSDAP carried the elements of warfare into the political arena. In the restless, post-war period the party which

pursued its goal without compromise and directed the hatred of its followers toward an internal enemy was bound to meet with some success.⁸

Hitler, moreover, provided the movement with a hope for a great, new future linked to a distant, heroic, and mythical past. He could lift his audiences out of the grey, miserable, everyday world into the realms of a glorious, new Reich. His ability in that respect could not even be equalled by the most orthodox Marxist.⁹ Hitler was a strange combination of medieval, crusading knight and modern demagogue, a strident Messiah who called the whole person to a discipleship which promised to unite the individual with the nation's destiny.¹⁰

Where and how Hitler led that "reborn" nation became apparent even before September 1, 1939. The Hitler state wore a military uniform. Everywhere orders were given and obeyed, people were marching to work and later to war. This mobilization of the nation betrayed the origins of the NSDAP as clearly as did its final destruction. War was the womb in which National Socialism was conceived and the pit in which it was buried.

World War I, despite the preoccupation with the enormous problems which World War II left in its wake, has come to be considered by some historians the single most crucial event in the first half of our century. The controversy surrounding the publication of Fritz Fischer's book, Germany's Aims in the First World War,¹¹ is witness to that. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the renewed

interest in World War I is largely due to the questions which Germany and the world were forced to face after 1945. That points to a link between both wars which transcends ordinary, chronological history.

It cannot be seriously disputed today that World War I cut deeply into the political, economic, social and intellectual life of post-war Germany. If the dominant characteristics of Germany between the wars remained an elemental inability to come to terms with the defeat, the revolution, and the Versailles Treaty, then the man and the movement which stood in radical opposition to all three must be granted a place in the mainstream of German political life even before he managed to make the headlines in 1923. Adolf Hitler was in that sense World War I's very own child. Whether or not the era spanned by the two world wars can be considered a "fascist epoch",¹² does not alter the point that he was the central figure of that period.

Footnotes

¹Ralf Dahrendorf, Society and Democracy in Germany (New York, 1967), pp. 3 f.

²A.J.P. Taylor, The Course of German History: A Survey of the Development of German History since 1815 (London, 1961) p. 7.

³A typical center position is taken by Golo Mann (The History of Germany since 1789 [London, 1968], p. 417): "What had in fact started with Bismarck and what the First World War brought to fruition was the interregnum: the inability of the nation to settle its internal conflicts according to the rules and to give its state a satisfying meaning. If the one man had not existed, anything might have happened, but not National Socialism as we know it. He happened to exist. In an interregnum the strongest takes over and it was Hitler who happened to be the strongest."

⁴Werner Jochmann, Ausgewählte Dokumente zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus 1933-1945 - Kommentar (Bielefeld, 1966), p. 6.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Wolfgang Sauer, "National Socialism: Totalitarianism or Fascism?" The American Historical Review LXXIII No. 2 (1967) p. 416.

⁷Ernst von Salomon, Die Geächteten (Berlin, 1930), p. 82.

⁸Jochmann, p. 7.

⁹Karl Dietrich Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik: Eine Studie zum Machtverfall in der Demokratie (Villingen, 4 ed. 1964), p. 377.

¹⁰Melita Maschmann, a former BDM leader, made the following perceptive remarks on what led her and many young people like her to become fanatical National Socialists:

"Nichts war da, was rief, forderte und band. Nichts wofür es sich zu leben, zu kämpfen, zu sterben gelohnt hätte. Und in dieser Leere und Öde begegnete Ihnen das Phantom, das sich als jenes Ganze, als Gestalt des Ursprungs und der Zukunft zugleich ausgab. Die Formeln: Blut, Boden, Rasse, Volk, Führer, Reich fühlten sich jäh und unwiderstehlich mit der ganzen unbewussten Flut jener ausgehungerten Sehnsucht nach der Einheit des Lebens - als Heimat im gestuften Sein". (Fazit - Kein Rechtfertigungsversuch [Stuttgart, 1963] pp. 9 - 10.)

¹¹Fritz Fischer, Germany's Aims in the First World War (London, 1967). First published in German as: Griff nach der Weltmacht: die Kriegsziel Politik des Kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914-18. (Düsseldorf, 1961). This book unleashed a controversy among historians that has not yet subsided. Important chapters in the debate include: Gerhard Ritter, "Eine neue Kriegsschuldthese?" Zu Fritz Fischer's Buch 'Griff nach der Weltmacht'", Historische Zeitschrift, vol. 194 (1962), pp. 646-668; Hans Herzfeld, "Die Deutsche Kriegspolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg", Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 11, (1963), pp. 224-245; Fritz Fischer, Krieg der Illusionen: die deutsche Politik von 1911 bis 1914 (Düsseldorf, 1969), and Weltmacht oder Niedergang: Deutschland im Ersten Weltkrieg (Frankfurt, 1965.)

¹²The view that the era spanning the world wars can be considered as the epoch of fascism is based primarily on the work by Ernst Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Der italienische Faschismus, Der Nationalsozialismus (Munich, 1963).

Toward Defeat

If the outbreak of World War I can be considered to be the single most significant caesura in the first half of our century, then it is surely more than coincidence that one of the most remarkable men of the inter-war period should also refer to 1914 as the watershed in his lifetime. When the news that a European war had begun reached Adolf Hitler in Munich, the twenty-five year old Austrian postcard painter was overpowered with stormy enthusiasm.

To me those hours seemed like a release from the painful feelings of my youth....for me, as for every German, there now began the greatest and most unforgettable time of my earthly existence. Compared to the events of this gigantic struggle, everything past receded to shallow nothingness!¹

What was really the culmination of one of the most profound crises in Western civilization was greeted by the multitudes of Europe with salvos of ecstasy.² That spontaneous eruption of enthusiasm was both an indictment of the age which preceded the outbreak of war and testimony to a general naivité concerning things to come of shocking dimensions. For many, like Hitler, 1914 opened an escape hatch from the frustrations of a meaningless existence. Joining the German army gave him a sense of purpose and the feeling of participating as an equal in a great, national community (Gemeinschaft), that he had until then not experienced.³

By 1917, the euphoria of the "August days" had long since given way to the grim reality of modern warfare. Nineteen seventeen

by itself represents a cleavage within the larger framework of our century the consequences of which are still the subject of passionate and profound disagreement. In that year the United States of America entered the war on the side of the Entente. The American intervention proved to be decisive in determining the final outcome of the war and thereby also added to its own stature as a world power. The year 1917 moreover witnessed the destruction of the tsarist regime in Russia and the seizure of power by the Bolshevists. Imperial Germany was inextricably linked with the chain of events that led to the emergence of radical socialism in Russia and the determined military intervention in Europe by the United States. It was a critical year in Germany's history too.

The decision by Germany to resume unlimited submarine warfare in January 1917, even at the risk of an American declaration of war, was a manifestation of that nation's resolve to end the war by military victory. It was a military decision made in full awareness of the political implications it would carry with it, by the supreme military command (OHL)*: Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and General Erich Ludendorff. For the duration of the war Germany was controlled by the OHL. That did not mean that power had been wrested out of the hands of the peoples' representatives in the Reichstag for that political body had never really controlled the destiny of the nation. The German Reichstag had

*Obere Heeresleitung

nothing to do with the declaration of war itself in 1914. The Kaiser and his advisors had made the decision to mobilize. Once the Reichstag had voted the necessary credits required for fighting a war its members were sent home.⁴

The Kaiser and his government led by Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, however, had lost power or the willingness to wield it by January, 1917. There were reasons for this shift in political power. The most obvious and perhaps the most important factor was the enormous popularity of Hindenburg and Ludendorff. The German victory against Russia at Tannenberg had won these two men undying military fame. Hindenburg indeed became a legendary figure long before the war was over. Even defeat could not crack the myth of strength and success which surrounded him. A massive, old man with a huge moustache, Hindenburg simply radiated strength and confidence to a nation at war. The dignified, square Field Marshal was flanked by the cunning and ambitious Ludendorff in the papers and on posters everywhere. In the eyes of the people and the Kaiser, Hindenburg and Ludendorff could be trusted. They in turn took full advantage of this.⁶

As the year progressed and the hope for a military victory faded internal political and social tensions began to manifest themselves. A process of polarization set in which neither the defeat, the revolution, or the Weimar Republic could overcome.

When the war first broke out the political parties of Imperial Germany had agreed to discontinue internecine struggles and to

refrain from all opposition to the government. By December, 1914, this pledge to internal peace, the so-called "Burgfrieden", was broken over the question of war aims.⁷ Wilhelm II had assured the nation and the world when the war first began that Germany was not motivated by a lust for conquest. In the debate over the nation's war aims it soon became apparent, at least to the leftist elements within the Social Democratic Party (SPD), that powerful circles were in fact pursuing an annexationist policy. As early as December 1915, twenty SPD members voted against granting the government additional war credits to protest that policy.⁸ In reality the "Burgfrieden" had from the beginning meant little more than the right of the government to decide military, economic and political policy and to censor or suppress the free expression of political opinion throughout Germany.⁹

On Easter 1917, the left-wing members of the SPD, unwilling to allow themselves to be bridled any longer, either by the government or the majority of the party, broke away to form the Independent Social Democratic Party.¹⁰ Within the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) itself emerged a radical faction known as the "Internationale". It was led by Karl Liebknecht and worked in conjunction with Rosa Luxemburg. The latter was active in producing and distributing anti-war, anti-government literature.¹¹ The USPD too declared itself to be absolutely opposed to the ruling system in Germany, the government's war policies, and the SPD position regarding both. It was a revolutionary party which demanded

the immediate socialization of the nation's major industries and landed estates. The current government was to be replaced by a "proletarian dictatorship."¹²

The split within German Social Democracy had a profound effect on the internal political situation. Like the Russian revolution, it appeared at first a blessing to the powers that shaped German policy since it divided the united workers front. Although it divided that front it did erect a rallying point around which determined opponents of the war could gather. The energetic USPD furthermore forced the SPD to sharpen its demands for reform if it hoped to keep the majority of workers in its own ranks.

Worker restlessness following the February Revolution in Russia and the recent American declaration of war convinced the government that it too would have to do something. Accordingly, the Kaiser, in his Easter address to the nation promised electoral reform for Prussia. The demand for electoral reform, which the Social Democrats had championed for so long and which had united them with the workers like no other issue, had appeared to have been granted. Support came from the National Liberals, the Progressive Peoples Party and the Chancellor. The Conservatives, however, aware of what that would mean to their position of power in Prussia, resisted any democratization. "Freedom, in the German sense, does not mean self-government by the masses", declared Graf Yorck v. Wartenburg in the Prussian House of Lords.¹³ The war, a Conservative declaration added in July 1917, in no way pointed up

the need for any such reform measures.¹⁴

The vague, half-hearted promises of reform by the government and the staunch opposition to change demonstrated by the Conservatives alienated the workers and angered the Social Democrats. Nevertheless, because the Conservatives dominated the Prussian "Landtag" and enjoyed the support of the supreme military command they were able to successfully resist the introduction of that legislation, until the closing weeks of the war. Max Weber saw more clearly than most that such strenuous opposition to democratization by the ruling élite could not be justified at such a time: "der Wille zur Ohnmacht im Innern", he wrote in 1917, "ist mit dem Willen zur Macht in der Welt... nicht zu vereinen".¹⁵ Friedrich Ebert, chairman of the SPD, succinctly and powerfully summed up the whole question of reform in a speech before the Reichstag:

"...dieses neue Schützengrabengeschlecht lässt sein politisches Leben nicht wieder in die Drahtverhaue des Dreiklassensystems hineinzwängen...Das neue Geschlecht verlangt Freiheit und staatsbürgerliche Gleichberechtigung, und es wird, wenn es sein muss, sie zu erkämpfen wissen".¹⁶

The reform question had not yet abated when a Reichstag majority moved to adopt a "peace resolution", proposed by Matthias Erzberger, leader of the Center Party. Supported by the Social Democrats, the Progressives and his own party, Erzberger proposed that Germany seek a peace of understanding and reconciliation on the basis of no annexation.¹⁷ The "peace resolution" raised a storm in the Reichstag during which Bethmann Hollweg was forced to

resign (by Ludendorff). This proposal was completely unacceptable to the Conservatives, the right-wing Liberals, and more importantly, to Ludendorff and Hindenburg. They sought a "German" peace, a peace with victory which would compensate the nation for the enormous losses in men and material. The ruling élite was also aware that only a "German" peace could save them from the gathering forces of democracy.¹⁸

As the summer wore on the process of political polarization became more pronounced. The people no longer believed that a military victory was imminent despite the results promised by the OHL in conjunction with the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. England had not been forced to her knees, the United States had entered the conflict, and Russia, despite the February Revolution, was still an enemy to be reckoned with. War-weariness and despair was widespread among the people.¹⁹

The Erzberger "peace resolution" brought the entire question of war aims into the open. It had simmered beneath the surface since the beginning of the war but Bethmann Hollweg had astutely managed to prevent the question from reaching the public forum by government ban.²⁰ In November, 1916, the ban was lifted at the behest of Ludendorff who was convinced that an open discussion on the matter would allow a popular "will to victory" emerge within the nation. The "peace resolution" supported by the Reichstag majority made the very opposite more probable. To counter that tendency supporters of a "Siegfrieden" founded the Fatherland Party in early September, 1917.²¹

The Fatherland Party was led by Wolfgang Kapp, a Prussian landed aristocrat, and Admiral von Tirpitz. According to its founding manifesto it was to be a party above parties: "The German Fatherland Party will not enter into rivalry with patriotically minded political parties...It is a party of union."²² The manifesto then went on to denounce internal strife, urging all Germans to remember that victory was all that mattered. Reform could be discussed later! In short, all true Germans supported a "Hindenburg peace", the rest were to be considered traitors. What that would mean after the defeat was clear - those who had supported a peace of understanding had stabbed Germany in the back.

The Fatherland Party added an ominous, new dimension to the German political spectrum. Wolfgang Sauer has defined it as the "first pre-fascist mass movement".²³ Although it was organized by conservative forces it sought mass support with the help of militant and violent propaganda. Less than one year after the founding of the Fatherland party it had gathered 1,250,000 members.²⁴ Their propaganda warned the entire nation, including workers, that a peace without victory would bring in its wake "intolerable burdens", adding that it would certainly also hit the working class just as hard as anyone else. Indirectly, therefore, the responsibility for any disaster was already being shifted onto other shoulders. Any concrete position on the question of war aims was successfully blanketed by the assertion that Germany

was in a desperate, life-or-death struggle. Moreover, since Germany was fighting an ideological battle against the "fake democracies" of England and America any talk of internal democratization was by implication treasonous.²⁵

The Fatherland Party forshadowed National Socialism in several ways. Both claimed to be the sole, unsullied incarnation of the "real" Germany and opponents were accordingly exposed to the most bitter abuse, all in the name of the nation. Both sprang from social stratas which felt themselves profoundly threatened; indeed, their very existences were enemy-oriented. Both reduced the complex policy questions to simplistic, propagandistic slogans - "life or death"!²⁶

The position taken by the OHL vis à vis the Fatherland Party was one of unqualified support. Ludendorff welcomed their activities.²⁷ In reality the Fatherland Party was little more than a civilian follow-up campaign against the "peace resolution" launched by the army within its own ranks earlier that summer. The so-called "Vaterländische Unterricht"²⁸ was well under way by the time the Fatherland Party itself was founded.

The principles that were to be followed in these army "fatherland" instructions were spelled out in a memorandum issued by Ludendorff on July 29, 1917. Patriotic instruction, it noted, should emphasize that complete faith in final victory was justified. Although the "peace resolution" as such was not directly mentioned, instructors were urged to impress on the soldiers that "Friedens-

duselei verlängert ebenso wie Missmut den Krieg. Einigkeit im Innern macht stark, alles andere schwächt.²⁹ Two days later Iudendorff sent a secret memorandum to all superior officers in which he complained bitterly about treachery on the home front:

Im Innern machen sich neben krassen Egoismus und rücksichtsloser Gewinn- und Genussucht Flaumacherei, Pessimismus und Pflichtvergessenheit breit, die den Ausgang des Krieges gefährden können. Diese Erscheinungen sind zum Teil auf wirkliche Notstände, wie schwierige Ernährungs- und Kohlenlage, pekuniäre Sorgen, Länge des Krieges, Verlust von Angehörigen, usw. zurückzuführen. Zum grössten Teil aber sind sie durch die zielbewusste Agitation gewisser staatszerstörender Elemente hervorgerufen, die skrupellos diese Notstände zur Förderung ihrer politischen Ziele ausnutzen und Unfrieden, Verhetzung, usw. auf alle Art zu stiften suchen.³⁰

With every worsening of the military situation this unbridled hostility toward subversive elements at home increased. The whole post-war controversy surrounding the responsibility for Germany's disastrous collapse had in a sense already begun before the collapse was complete. The bitter differences between the supreme military command and those who sought peace by a "no annexations-no indemnities" policy would not have been so fateful had not the OHL carried the political feud to the front. In the same way that the Fatherland Party went to the masses with its extreme propaganda so the "patriotic instruction" radicalized and polarized the troops. The men were told in countless speeches and pamphlets that elements within Germany, represented by Liebknecht

and even Scheidemann and Erzberger, were traitors to the nation. As originators of the "peace resolution", the latter two, some "instructors" maintained, ought to have been whipped, thrown behind bars, or better still, executed.³¹ In the post-war period ex-soldiers frequently carried out assassinations of which the original instigators were, indirectly, Ludendorff's "patriotic instructors".

Because the government had lost control over the army, and since the latter in turn developed an insatiable appetite for men and supplies in its gamble for military victory, tension between the fighting front and the home front eventually spilled over into the population at large. A bitterness developed between the aristocratic generals who led the Army and some of the workers who sporadically demonstrated their war-weariness and anger at the course of events, which had a profound influence on the political climate during the Weimar Republic and particularly on the heated debates surrounding the question of Germany's defeat.

Following the enormous losses on both sides in 1915 and 1916 it became quite plain that sheer weight in terms of men and fire power would ultimately determine the outcome. The lines between military and political problems accordingly disappeared in proportion to the degree to which the war was total. In short, it was above all an economic war in which successful blockades and the mass production of weapons, supplies and foodstuffs, sustained or increased over a long period of time, were decisive factors in

determining victory or defeat. In Germany, the forces which determined political and military objectives also ended up co-ordinating and regimenting the economic and human resources of the nation.

Long before most German politicians understood the nature and implications of the war, Ludendorff and Hindenburg were already referring to it as one that would determine Germany's very survival.³² Viewed against their determination to end the war only after Germany's hegemony over Europe was achieved their definition of the war was a self-fulfilling prophecy. From the time that Hindenburg and Ludendorff took over the supreme military command they strove unrelentingly to bring the entire nation, not just the Army, under their control.

Three months after they moved into the Great Headquarters of the German army, Hindenburg and Ludendorff prevailed upon the government to introduce the "Vaterländisches Hilfsgesetz",³³ a law which compelled all men between the ages of 17 and 60 not liable to the draft to render whatever related services the War Ministry required of them. Moreover, this law provided the War Ministry with powers for "participation" in and regimentation of the press, schools and churches.³⁴ This measure was significant not only because it was passed against a background of disagreement between the government and the supreme military command but also because it provided an indication of the lengths to which the OHL was prepared to go in the mobilization of the nation. The

"Hindenburg Program" was based on military calculations and as such did not take into consideration the far-reaching repercussions such demands would have on the social, political and financial fabric of Germany. Only giant, efficient corporations with a regimented labour force could hope to cope with the OHL's demands with the result that big business became bigger at the expense of small firms and large industrial labour unions stronger relative to their unorganized, small shop brothers.³⁵ Ultimately, it was a reckless gamble of the nation's human and material resources. In a letter to Bethmann Hollweg on October 23, 1916, Hindenburg advocated the closing down of all German universities: "der Eindruck im Ausland kann uns gleichgültig sein, wenn wir den Endzweck des Krieges erreichen."³⁶ In the early months of 1917, Hindenburg assured the Chancellor, a battle would be fought to determine whether the German people would continue or cease to exist. It was this ruthless regimentation of the entire nation, this will to total war in which Germany's nationhood itself was placed into a life or death balance, this unwillingness to modify excessive war aims and then to call it a struggle for existence, that marked the beginning of serious antagonism not only between Reichstag and OHL but also between the OHL and the workers.

There were three overt acts of mass opposition by some workers toward the government during the course of the war. The first was a three day strike by 55,000 Berlin metal workers in June, 1916, to protest the arrest of Liebknecht and thus, indirectly, the con-

tinuation of the war.³⁷ The second major manifestation of worker unrest occurred in mid-April, 1917. On April 16, some 200,000 workers in Berlin failed to show up for work. The next day they were joined by sympathizers in Leipzig who combined their action with political demands: peace on the basis of no reparations or annexations, electoral reforms, freedom of the press, and the lifting of the "Vaterländische Hilfsdienst" laws.³⁸ Events in Russia, the American declaration of war, the intransigence of the government, and the agitation of leftists in Germany, were beginning to convince the working class that an early end to the war could only be achieved by a change in the political structure itself.

The supreme military command reacted to this strike with repressive manners. In what must be considered a classical forerunner of National Socialist propaganda, Lieutenant-General Groener, chief of the War Bureau, created for the purpose of carrying out the "Hindenburg Programm", issued a warning to the munitions workers:

"Eine unstühnbare Schuld nimmt derjenige auf sich, der in der Heimat feiert, statt zu arbeiten. Für eure Schuld müssen unsere Feldgrauen bluten.

Wer wagt es, dem Rufe Hindenburgs zu trotzen? Ein Hundsfott, wer streikt, solange unsere Heere vor dem Feinde stehen! ...Arbeit, und wiederum Arbeit bis zum glücklichen Ende des Krieges. Diese mutigen Arbeiter sollten rücksichtslos gegen alle diejenigen vorgehen, die hetzen und aufreizen, um dem Heer die Waffen und Munition zu entziehen. Leset Hindenburgs Brief immer wieder und ihr werdet erkennen, wo unsere schlimmsten Feinde stecken. Nicht draussen bei Arras, an der Aisne und in der Champagne -

mit diesen werden eure feldgrauen Söhne und Brüder fertig. Nicht drüben in London! Mit diesen werden unsere Blaujacken auf den Unterseeboten gründlich Abrechnung halten. Die schlimmsten Feinde stecken unter uns.³⁹

This document was distributed in pamphlet form and published in the leading German newspapers. There could hardly be a more well-defined precursor of the "stab-in-the-back" legend, combined with the will to destroy that "most wicked of all enemies". Hitler merely defined that foe more closely after the war. All the National Socialist ravings about a world conspiracy led by Jews would have fallen on deaf ears if the supreme military command had not systematically attacked an "internal enemy" as if only sabotage stood between the German armies and victory. In the heat of battle Ludendorff's "patriotic instruction" must have enraged those who really believed that all their sacrifices were being undermined by certain elements back home. It cannot be denied that forces inspired by radical, revolutionary socialism were at work in Germany. On the other hand, the hysterical, violent attacks launched against both radicals and "peace proposal" supporters is witness to the supreme military command's own growing sense of despair and desperation. Instead of treating the strikes as a manifestation of war-weariness the Army dealt ruthlessly with the symptom and not the cause. The vast majority of German workers remained faithfully on the job but the hostility generated by such radical attacks on those who dared to express their opposition to the war had far-reaching effects on the political climate of Germany long after the war was over.

The strike in January, 1918, only hardened, if that was possible, the supreme military command's determination to deal severely with the "internal enemy". By then it was clear to many workers that Germany was fighting an out and out war of imperialism; negotiations leading up to the Treaty of Brest-Litowsk were witness to that. The demands made by the strikers had not changed, but in late January the strike was joined by more than one million workers. Hindenburg, in a letter to Chancellor Hertling simply stated that strikes during war-time were treasonous "klipp und klar".⁴⁰ Moreover, he urged the government not to make any concessions, and none were made. Although the January strikes in Germany and Austria were of no significance in terms of cutting back the production of arms and munitions they were indicative of a growing political polarization within the nation: war-weariness and deep distrust of the political establishment on the one hand, desperation and fanaticism on the other.

The mood of depression, so apparent in Germany since the "Kohl-rübenwinter" of 1916-1917, also found its echo among the enlisted men.⁴¹ Perhaps the single most instructive source on the growing unrest is the diary of one Richard Stumpf, a seaman in the Imperial German Navy.⁴² Stumpf, like so many others, had initially applauded the outbreak of war in 1914. But things changed. During the course of the war he gradually came to hate his superiors and the feudal military structure which governed the state. This is significant in so far as he was anything but a disciple of democracy or repub-

licanism. Indeed, he called the red flag a "dirty rag" at one point and never showed any genuine sympathy for radical revolutionaries. Why did he side with the mutineers in 1917 and 1918? According to Stumpf the deeper roots of the rebellion were hunger, an intense longing for peace, and the brutal mistreatment of ordinary seamen by their officers.⁴³ The alleged subversive activities of radical socialists were not the cause of mutiny in the German navy. Shared grievances rather than an international conspiracy allowed essentially conservative men like Stumpf to rejoice in the Kronstadt rebellion.⁴⁴ When the end of the war finally came Richard Stumpf must have spoken for countless German veterans when he made the following entry in his diary:

My God - why did we have to have such criminal, conscienceless officers? It was they who deprived us all our love for the Fatherland, our joy in our German existence, and our pride for our incomparable institutions.⁴⁵

Although he, like many of his countrymen, deeply lamented the fate of Germany those sentiments did not extend to the authoritarian, Imperial Regime. Once the old regime began to totter and crumble there were few indeed prepared to defend it. Imperial Germany was not shattered by a revolutionary upheaval within its own borders but rather collapsed under the weight of political shortsightedness and military defeat.

In the spring of 1918 the German supreme military command made a final, desperate bid for victory. In the east a peace treaty had been signed with Soviet Russia at Brest-Litovsk. It was an imperialist peace designed to establish complete German

hegemony at the expense of Russia. In reality, Ludendorff's policy of dismantling the Russian empire brought no peace to the east, which in turn compelled the conqueror to maintain strong forces there, forces desperately needed for the great offensive in the west.⁴⁶ That offensive, after some striking victories, ground to a halt in June. In August, the German Army was forced to go on the defensive. On September 29, Ludendorff suddenly conceded defeat and urged the government to seek an immediate armistice.⁴⁷ Although the supreme military command suddenly admitted defeat they did not shoulder any responsibility for it. Ludendorff could not accept the fact that his great gamble had ended in disaster. Indeed, he prepared the way for the National Socialist theory of the defeat. In late August, 1918, a certain Lieutenant-colonel Nicolai, chief of the supreme military command's secret news service made the following notes after an encounter with Ludendorff:

Ich erkenne zum erstenmal, dass er am Ende seiner Kraft zu sein scheint, die daran zerbricht, dass der Zweifrontenkrieg gegen Ost und West, auf welchen der Generalstab vorbereitet war, und welchem sich Ludendorff gewachsen fühlte, zu einem Zweifrontenkrieg gegen den Aussen und den innern Feind geworden ist.⁴⁸

The stepped up activities of the Spartacists reinforced by Bolshevik indoctrinated soldiers returning from the east during the summer of 1918 gave those who could not accept the defeat an excellent alibi.⁴⁹ What was really a product of the defeat was made to look like its cause. Ludendorff's crafty strategy

of heaving the whole wretched state of affairs into the arms of those whom he had constantly attacked set the pattern for the conservative abdication of power on the eve of defeat.⁵⁰

Toward Defeat

¹Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, (Boston, Sentry Edition, 1962), pp. 161, 163-164.

²"Die Begeisterung, mit der überall in Europa der Krieg begrüsst wurde", writes one well-known historian, "ist auch etwas wie ein Urteil über die Zeit, aus der der Krieg herausführte. Die Bereitschaft zum Opfer und zur Hingabe, die Empfänglichkeit für das Gemeinschaftserlebnis, die Sehnsucht, das begrenzte individuelle in einem grösseren gemeinsamen Schicksal aufgehen zu lassen, die Suche nach der Herausforderung und dem Abenteuer - all dies zeugt davon, wie viele Menschen sich fremd fühlten in der grauen, strengen Arbeitswelt der Industriegesellschaft, die das Niveau des materiellen Wohlstandes für alle noch nicht erreicht hatte." Peter Graf Kielmansegg, Deutschland und der Erste Weltkrieg (Frankfurt, 1968), p.147.

³Walter Hofer, "Die Diktatur Hitlers bis zum Beginn des Zweiten Weltkrieges" in Handbuch der Deutschen Geschichte ed. Leo Just, Vol. 4, part 2 (Konstanz, New Edition, 1965), p. 5.

⁴Arthur Rosenberg, The Birth of the German Republic 1871-1918, (London, 1931), p. 77.

⁵Mann, Pp. 304-305, 318-319.

⁶Arthur Rosenberg referred to the period starting from the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare to the final defeat as "the dictatorship of Ludendorff". (The Birth of the German Republic 1871-1918, pp. 114-152).

⁷Kielmansegg, p. 246 f.

⁸Rosenberg, p. 121.

⁹Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁰For a history of the forces which led to the split within German Social Democracy, see: Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy, 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge, Mass., 1955).

¹¹Rosa Luxemburg and her supporters called themselves "Spartacists" after Spartacus, a slave revolt leader of antiquity. Herbert Michaelis and Ernst Schraepler, eds., Ursachen und Folgen vom deutschen Zusammenbruch 1918 und 1945 bis zur staatlichen Neuordnung Deutschlands in der Gegenwart, Vol. I (Berlin, 1959) Doc. 150, 153. Hereafter cited as Ursachen und Folgen.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ursachen und Folgen, vol. I, p. 309.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 325-6.

¹⁵Klaus Schwabe, "Zur politischen Haltung der deutschen Professoren im Ersten Weltkrieg" in Historische Zeitschrift vol. 193 (1961), pp. 601-634.

¹⁶Ursachen und Folgen, vol. I, pp. 310-311.

¹⁷Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 3-58.

¹⁸Anneliese Thimme, Flucht in den Mythos: Die Deutsche nationale Volkspartei und die Niederlage von 1918 (Göttingen, 1969) esp. "'Staatsgesinnung gegen Parteigesinnung' oder 'Privilegierte Gesellschaftsordnung gegen demokratische Gesellschaftsordnung',

pp. 95-106. In general: Eckart Kehr, Der Primat der Innenpolitik. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur preussisch-deutschen Sozialgeschichte im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, (Berlin, 1965).

¹⁹An entry in the diary of a German sailor captures the mood of despair among the people:

(Late July 1917) ...I missed the lusty curses of the soldiers, the suspicious listening of the dock workers and the complaints of the women. Does this mean that things are now better in the land? I am afraid not. The people are so apathetic and hopeless that it hurts my heart. It isn't so bad as long as the people still have the strength to vent their anger by cursing. Only when they have lost all hope and are totally depressed do they appear as disconsolate and indifferent as they are nowadays. Daniel Horn ed., War, Mutiny and Revolution in the German Navy: The World War I Diary of Seaman Richard Stumpf, (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1967), p. 342.

Stumpf's diary was included in the Reichstag Investigation Committee report on the causes of Germany's collapse in 1918: Das Werk des Untersuchungsausschusses, 4. Reihe. "Die Ursachen des Deutschen Zusammenbruchs im Jahre 1918", 12 vols. (Berlin, 1925-1929). Ralph H. Lutz has edited a one volume selection in English: The Causes of German Collapse in 1918: Sections of the Officially Authorized Report of the Commission of the German Constituent Assembly and of the German Reichstag, 1919-1928 (Stanford, 1934).

²⁰Fischer, pp. 148-176.

²¹Hans Gatzke, Germany's Drive to the West: A study of Germany's War Aims during the First World War (Baltimore, 1950), p. 206 f.

²²Ibid., pp. 207-208.

²³Sauer, "National Socialism: Totalitarianism or Fascism"?

p. 420, fn. 36:

The 'Vaterlandspartei', organized in 1917 by military and agrarian groups (e.g., Alfred von Tirpitz, Wolfgang Kapp) in Germany to support imperialist warfare, was, significantly enough, the first pre-fascist mass movement. The foundation of the Nazi party later followed the same pattern; Hitler acted originally as an agent of the Munich headquarters of the Reichswehr. In addition, Anton Drexler, the founder of the first nucleus of the Nazi party, was a member of the 'Vaterlandspartei'. Both the Reichswehr officers in Munich and Drexler aimed at overcoming what they felt was the major shortcoming of the Vaterlandspartei: it had no appeal to the workers. (Ibid.)

²⁴Gerhard Ritter, "Die Herrschaft des deutschen Militarismus und die Katastrophe von 1918"; Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk: Das Problem des Militarismus in Deutschland, vol. 4 (Munich, 1968), p. 25.

²⁵Karl Wortmann, Geschichte der Deutschen Vaterlandspartei 1917-1918 (Halle, 1922), p. 41.

²⁶Ritter, in describing the brutality of post-war German politics to which the NSDAP generously contributed noted that "In ihnen ist die Saat der 'Vaterlandspartei' mit ihren masslosen Anklagen gegen die Friedensresolution und ihre Urheber schliesslich noch blutig aufgegangen". (Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk, vol. 4, p. 26).

²⁷Erich Ludendorff, Meine Kriegserinnerungen 1914-1918 (Berlin, 1920), p. 369.

²⁸Ursachen und Folgen, vol. I, pp. 220-223.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 224-225.

³¹Gatzke, p. 218.

³²Ursachen und Folgen, vol. I, pp. 15-16.

³³The "Vaterländisches Hilfsgesetz" came into effect on December 5, 1916. It was one of the most important bills of the "Hindenburg Program", which sought to harness all of Germany's industry to the needs of the military.

³⁴Ursachen und Folgen, vol. I, pp. 17-22.

³⁵Gerald D. Feldman, Army, Industry and Labor in Germany 1914-1918. (Princeton, 1966), pp. 154-166.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 12-15.

³⁷Hans Herzfeld, Der Erste Weltkrieg (Munich, dtv. edition, 1968), p. 262.

³⁸Ibid., p. 266.

³⁹Ursachen und Folgen, vol. I, pp. 205-206.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 274-276.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 224-225.

⁴²See footnote no. 19

⁴³Stumpf, p. 11.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 338. Kronstadt was the island naval base off St. Petersburg. Its sailors had been prominent in the overthrow of the tsarist regime in February 1917 and in early July refused to obey the orders of the Provisional Government.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 419.

⁴⁶Fischer, p. 509.

⁴⁷Richard M. Watt, The Kings Depart: The Tragedy of Germany: Versailles and the German Revolution (New York, 1968), p. 144.

The day before, on the afternoon of September 28, Ludendorff's "self-control snapped and he went raging around his office cursing the Kaiser, the Reichstag, the home front and the politicians". (Ibid.) Ludendorff simply could not shoulder the responsibility himself.

⁴⁸Wolfgang Foerster, Der Feldherr Ludendorff im Unglück (Wiesbaden, 1952), p. 63.

⁴⁹Watt, p. 143.

⁵⁰Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 2, pp. 322-324.

From Revolution to Peace Treaty -
Moderates Shoulder the Defeat

If the roots of the German revolution, such as it was, are clearly visible in the pages of Stumpf's diary so are the "second thoughts" which took hold of so many even before the Treaty of Versailles was signed. Although he was so strongly opposed to the authoritarianism of Imperial Germany as to find it intolerable, Stumpf, nevertheless, winced at the thought of Wilson "chasing out" the emperor. The Weimar Republic was never able to shake off the stigma of illegitimacy. It was, in the eyes of many Germans, a bastard regime sired by the American President, Woodrow Wilson. Germany, which (to continue the metaphor), was lured to Compiègne with the Fourteen Points and then raped in Versailles. Even the astute Richard Stumpf was surprised and shocked when he realized what the armistice really meant. The initial response on November 11, he recalls, was wild rejoicing in the streets - the war was over. Then came the news of the armistice terms:

It can't be. This is ridiculous. ...It means a fight to the end. ...What a sudden change from the joy we had felt that morning! "This is what you get for your God-damned brotherhood [of nations]," I shouted to the suddenly silent spectators. It was too much for me to bear and I hurried off to grieve in a lonely corner.¹

The same astonished disbelief which the government and the Reichstag had displayed 6 weeks earlier when the supreme military command revealed that the war was lost now hit the people in the streets.

To say that the population had not been kept informed during the war would be a severe understatement. Some could not believe that Germany was defeated until the Versailles Treaty was signed 6 months later! Others never believed it, not for lack of evidence but because they would not open their minds to it.

If Stumpf's reaction to the end of the war can be considered at all representative then the failure of the revolution becomes quite understandable. The masses, including the troops, had lost their trust in the emperor and, in part, in the supreme military command. But they were, nevertheless, not prepared to struggle for a new social order. They wanted peace and bread. As long as the USPD and the Spartacists headed their attacks against the old regime under the slogans of "down with the war" and "down with the imperialists and militarists", their support continued to mushroom.² Once the war was over and Luxemburg and Liebknecht made it known that the struggle against the capitalist system had just begun, their support began to diminish.³

The Spartacists made the fatal mistake of holding what were really manifestations of war-weariness to be expressions of radical, revolutionary fervour. The extreme right, on the other hand, accused everyone but themselves of having brought about the collapse of Germany in November, 1918. Paradoxically enough only the Spartacists would have been proud to plead guilty to those charges had their own plans really materialized. The moderate parties, i.e., those that had supported the "peace proposal" of July, 1917, were left to rescue what could still be rescued. Thus,

a reluctant, "Ruhe und Ordnung" Republic was born faced with radical Socialists on the one side while hostile reactionaries were waiting in the wings.⁴

Spartacist rhetoric and violence, although ending in dismal failure, did frighten the leaders of the Republic into sheltering the supporters of the old regime including the supreme military command under Hindenburg. Friedrich Ebert, Social Democrat and the first President of the Weimar Republic, anxious to restore order in Germany, asked Hindenburg and his officers to remain in their positions. Hindenburg offered his services to the Republic under one condition: "wenn Regierung und Reichskanzler zusammenstehen und sagen, wir wollen den Bolschewismus bekämpfen, so stehe das Offizierskorps geschlossen hinter ihnen."⁵ This modus vivendi was reached on November 5. Six days later Hindenburg managed another victory for himself in the midst of defeat: he was spared the humiliation of having to sign the armistice in the Forest of Compiègne. Erzberger, unwisely but courageously, accepted the thankless task. Hindenburg, the legendary hero of Tanneberg, came out of the defeat unscathed.⁶

The Republic, however, was in trouble. Relations between the Majority Socialists led by Ebert and the Independent Socialists, tenuous at best since the simultaneous proclamation of the Republic by Scheidemann and Liebknecht, completely deteriorated over the question of who was to be entrusted with leadership of the Army. Ebert's decision to retain Hindenburg and his Imperial officers made any chance for a reconciliation between the Independent Socia-

lists, the Majority Socialists, and the Army virtually impossible. Supporters of the radical Socialists, convinced that reactionary forces were intent on strangling the revolution, began to take to the streets. After a severe clash between soldiers of the Imperial Army and rebellious sailors ensconced in the Imperial Palace and Stables Ebert and the supreme military command decided to organize a volunteer corps to deal with leftist revolutionaries. Gustav Noske, appointed Minister of Defense, took command of the Free Corps.⁷

In mid January 1919, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were arrested and evidently deliberately murdered by members of the Free Corps operating in Berlin. Communist uprisings were ruthlessly and systematically crushed in the winter of 1919. By the end of April only Munich remained in the hands of radical Socialists. The revolution in Bavaria, although part of the larger upheaval in Germany, nevertheless, had its own peculiar rhythm and was followed by an equally distinct reaction.⁸

Bavaria had always enjoyed a special status within the German federation, yet during the course of the war whatever state autonomy it had managed to retain was eroded. By 1917, the proud Bavarian Army was for all intents and purposes under Prussian command. Their industry and agriculture too were subject to the bureaucrats of Berlin.⁹ Coming as it did during a time of serious social dislocation, with one million men in uniform and hosts of rural families moving into urban centers to work in war industries, Bavaria was

in a state of considerable tension during the final two years of the war. Serious food shortages further aggravated an already grave situation. Indeed a noted historian has found that the people of Bavaria harboured greater resentment toward their own authorities for their inability to organize a decent food program than toward the British for subjecting Germany to a blockade.¹⁰ In 1918 the problems surrounding the production and distribution of the basic necessities of life received more attention in the Bavarian newspapers than did events at the front. The war had become uninteresting.¹¹ It was this antipathy to the war that alienated Ludwig III, the last king of Bavaria, from his subjects. Ludwig III was an out and out annexationist. Because the revolution held out the promise of peace and bread no one lifted a rifle to defend the old regime against Kurt Eisner on November 8.

Eisner, a Socialist and former editor of the SPD newspaper, Vorwärts, initially supported Germany's declaration of war. He echoed the feelings of many fellow Social Democrats in August 1914: "Now Tsarism has attacked Germany", he wrote at that time, "now we have no choice, now there is no looking back."¹² By December, 1914, however, Eisner was already convinced that the German militarists were largely responsible for the war. In 1917, he joined the USPD, since he looked upon the SPD as being little more than a passive supporter of the government.¹³

Widespread war-weariness and finally the shock of the defeat allowed Eisner to move into the political vacuum of Bavaria.

Although the old regime fell without a fight it soon became quite apparent that the Socialists led by Eisner did not have mass support. The Bavarian "Landtag" election results of January, 1919, gave his Independent Socialists only 2 1/2% of the popular vote.¹⁴ Eisner's political career was all but finished. His efforts to gain national and international recognition as the leader of a Socialist, peace-loving Bavaria went unrewarded. Eisner's attempts to reactivate the revolution in Germany with the publication of documents designed to prove Germany's responsibility for the outbreak of World War I earned him contempt at home and no notice abroad.¹⁵

The Eisner regime failed because it was not able to solve some of the basic problems which allowed it to gain political control in the first place. The economic crisis continued, indeed worsened, throughout the winter of 1918-19. Food was scarce, unemployment rampant, and masses of soldiers were milling about the countryside. Eisner's political career was all but terminated and his popularity badly eroded when he was gunned down on February 21 by one Count Arco auf Valley, a member of a right-wing extremist organization, while on his way to the Bavarian state assembly where he had intended to hand in his resignation. Bavaria, unstable since the end of the war, was now in a state of near-anarchy. The SPD, led by Adolf Hoffmann, claimed to be in power until a group of so-called "Coffee House Anarchists" sent the Hoffmann regime fleeing to Bamberg in upper Franconia in early April while in Munich a Soviet-styled Räterepublik (Republic of Councils) was proclaimed.¹⁶

After a farcical beginning,¹⁷ The Bavarian Republic of Councils came under the control of Towia Axelrod, Max Levien, Eugen Leviné and Rudolf Egelhofer, of which only Egelhofer, a twenty-six-year-old sailor who had participated in the Kiel Mutiny, was a native German. Axelbrod, Levien and Leviné were of Russian-Jewish extraction. From the very beginning, the Bavarian Republic of Councils was forced to defend itself with arms. Egelhofer organized a Bavarian Red Army which, in the opinion of some historians, was the best-paid force in history. Aside from a very handsome salary, the Bavarian Red Army also provided free food, drink and prostitutes.¹⁸

In their efforts to alleviate the severe food shortages the leaders of the Republic of Councils forced the peasants to volunteer whatever supplies they possessed.¹⁹ Marauding bands of soldiers went virtually unrestrained throughout the countryside. This audacious assault on private property netted the Republic of Councils a legacy of suspicion and hostility. As if they had not already antagonized the citizenry sufficiently, the Republic of Councils next threatened the Catholic Church. Several clergymen were arrested, the Papal Nuntius, Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII) threatened, and an attempt was made to arrest the Bavarian Archbishop.²⁰ Finally, only days before the Republic of Councils was overthrown, a number of prominent citizens of Munich, mostly monarchists and conservatives, were executed by Egelhofer's Red Army guards. This occurred on April 29; four days later Munich was in the hands of Free Corps units, under orders from the German

Minister of Defense, Gustav Noske.

The "white terror" which followed made the activities of the Red Army look pale in comparison. Free Corps soldiers visited the most savage revenge on the leaders and sympathizers of the Räterepublik. Hundreds of people were brutally slain.²¹ That was followed by a veritable flood of political trials resulting in unbelievably one-sided sentences all of which had a profound effect on the political climate of Munich. Four years of war with all the concomitant strains and dislocations were climaxed by six months of political chaos ending in a brutal counterrevolutionary blood-bath. Bavaria had lost its sense of political balance in the course of these events.²² The fabric of society was shattered and riddled with suspicion and intrigue. Political parties of every imaginable shade mushroomed in post-revolutionary Munich. Here the language of fanatics and the use of force became standard political practice. Here too the spectre of Bolshevism, both hated and feared, could be joined to anti-Semitism to form a political weapon of unique potential. The other end of that weapon naturally was passionate nationalism. The more odious and unacceptable the consequences of the defeat appeared to many Germans, the more potent that weapon became.

* * * * *

Revolutionary uprisings had hardly been quelled when the young Weimar Republic was faced with the task of formally ending the war.

The Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28.²³ It was an event which unleashed a wave of shock and indignation across the nation.²⁴ Soon accusations and counter-accusations were fired off with ever-increasing intensity. So urgent did the matter appear that the newly elected National Assembly demanded some answers to the questions people were asking. Why were we defeated? Did submarine warfare fail? Did the supreme military command really deceive the nation? Why did the Navy mutiny? Why was the war not ended much earlier? Were the German fighting armies "stabbed in the back" with the dagger of revolution? These were some of the major questions being asked by the people. A Parliamentary Investigating Commission was therefore appointed by the Constituent National Assembly on August 20, 1919. This commission in turn delegated responsibility to four subcommittees, the last of which was assigned to the causes of the collapse.²⁵

Among those called before the fourth subcommittee to witness and thus help clarify some of the more controversial questions was General Ludendorff. Ludendorff agreed but only under the condition that Hindenburg would also be present. Evidently Ludendorff was well aware of the unblemished reputation which the aged Field Marshal still enjoyed and to appear together with him would presumably strengthen his own position.²⁶ Moreover, the danger of contradicting each other would thereby be virtually eliminated.

The halo of heroism which Hindenburg still wore was obvious from the reception he received upon arrival in Berlin. He was given a tumultuous welcome and urged not to testify by the crowd

that had gathered around the building where the hearings were held.²⁷ Once inside, the old Field Marshal simply read off a prepared statement.²⁸ In it he castigated the home front for having deserted and even stabbed the army in the back. The political parties, and leftist elements in particular, were subjected to the most bitter attacks.²⁹ All attempts by the Chairman of the hearings, Georg Gothein, to bring Hindenburg back to the original question, failed. The session ended with a stormy exchange between Ludendorff and members of the subcommittee with the result that additionally scheduled interrogations of Hindenburg and Ludendorff were cancelled.³⁰

Instead of revealing the Hindenburg-Ludendorff myth for what it was, the hearings had inadvertantly provided both men with an ideal platform for propagating the stab-in-the-back legend. Thus those for whom the defeat should have been the greatest liability were in fact able to use it as a weapon against the Weimar Republic. Many Germans, especially those who felt their way of life threatened in post-war Germany, embraced this legend with religious fervour. They needed a tangible enemy on whom they could vent their rage. The Weimar Republic, therefore, was faced with a host of hostile forces, both foreign and internal. In placating the one, the Weimar Republic invariably incurred the wrath of the other. Even without the Treaty of Versailles Germany would have experienced a period of internal conflict because the revolution was in reality little more than an emergency measure in full view of the military defeat. The deep social and political divisions

had not been bridged. Nevertheless, the Treaty of Versailles provided right-wing opponents of democracy with a limitless source of ammunition, of which Adolf Hitler and his henchmen made the most liberal use.³¹

From Revolution to Peace Treaty -
Moderates shoulder the Defeat

¹Stumpf, p. 428

²Eric Waldman, The Spartacist Uprising in 1919 and the Crisis of the German Socialist Movement: A Study of the relation of political theory and party practice (Milwaukee, 1958), pp. 84 f. For a more recent history of the revolution see A.J. Ryder, The German Revolution of 1918: A Study of German Socialism in War and Revolt (Cambridge, 1967).

³Rosa Luxemburg, Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1951), pp. 594-98.

⁴The Conservative party and scattered members of the right decided to change with the prevailing political winds and reconstituted themselves as the German National People's Party (DNVP). Lewis Hertzman, DNVP Right-Wing Opposition in the Weimar Republic 1918-1924 (Nebraska, 1963), pp. 32 f.

⁵Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 2, pp. 459-65.

⁶Andreas Dorpalen, Hindenburg and the Weimar Republic (Princeton, 1964), pp. 20-22.

⁷Watt, pp. 245 f.

⁸Alan Mitchell, Revolution in Bavaria: The Eisner Regime and the Soviet Republic (Princeton, 1965), p. 5.

⁹Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁰Karl Ludwig Ay, "Volksstimmung und Volksmeinung als Voraussetzung der Münchener Revolution von 1918" in Bayern im Umbruch:

²¹Some of the victims of Free Corps "mopping up" operations were innocent. On May 7, for example, soldiers shot and killed 21 people attending a meeting of the Society of St. Joseph. (Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 3, p. 130).

²²Hillmayr, "München und die Revolution von 1918/1919", p. 492. Also Heinrich Hannover, Elizabeth Hannover-Drück, Politische Justiz 1918-1933 (Frankfurt, 1966), pp. 63-75.

²³Erich Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, vol. I (Harvard Science Edition, 1967); esp. ch. IV, "The Treaty of Versailles", pp. 81-128.

²⁴The debate surrounding the Treaty of Versailles soon reached out beyond the borders of Germany as witnessed by the popularity of the book by J.M. Keynes, The Economic Consequences of the Peace (New York, 1920).

²⁵See Foreword to Ralph Haswell Lutz, ed., The Causes of the German Collapse in 1918, (Stanford, Archon Books, 1969).

²⁶Eyck, p. 137.

²⁷Dorpalen, pp. 48 f.

²⁸It is not quite certain who prepared Hindenburg's statement for him. The evidence points to Karl Helfferich, one of the most famous of the many liberals who moved to the right as a consequence of the war and the defeat. Hindenburg was Helfferich's guest during his stay in Berlin.

²⁹Official German Documents Relating to the World War, vol. II (New York, 1923), pp. 849-855. Also Ursachen und Folgen, vo. 4 pp. 7 - 8.

³⁰Dorpalen, p. 50.

³¹Fritz Dickmann, "Die Kriegsschuldfrage auf der Friedenskonferenz von Paris 1919", Historische Zeitschrift, vol. 197 (1963), pp. 94 f.

Der Krieg, aller Dinge Vater, ist auch der unsere.
 Der Geist der Materialschlacht...erzeugte Männer,
 wie sie bisher die Welt nie gesehen hatte. Es war
 eine ganz neue Rasse...Überwinder, Stahlnaturen...
 Jongleure des Todes, Meister des Sprengstoffes und
 der Flamme, prächtige Raubtiere.... Jeder Anders-
 fühlende muss mit dem Brandmal des Ketzers behaftet
 und ausgerottet werden.

- Ernst Jünger

(Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis)

Mit Stolz sind wir Soldaten uns bewusst, dass die
 Bewegung, die Sie ins Leben riefen und die heute
 kraftvoll den Staat durchdrungen hat, in ihrem
 Ursprung auf das soldatische Erlebnis des Krieges
 zurückgeht. Die Kampfgemeinschaft auf Leben und
 Tod, die draussen in den Schützengräben der Front
 einst alle verband, war zugleich die Geburtsstunde
 der grossen Idee, der Sie im Deutschland der Nach-
 kriegszeit zum Durchbruch und zum Siege verholfen
 haben und in der sich heute das ganze Volk zu neuer
 Volksgemeinschaft zusammengefunden hat.

- Blomberg congratulatory note
 to Hitler April 20, 1934

The Remnant-Defeat as Revelation

The German Workers Party (DAP) was founded by Anton Drexler on January 5, 1919.¹ Drexler was a railway mechanic of Austrian extraction whose political activity began in the latter stages of the war. In 1917 he joined the Munich branch of the Fatherland Party only to withdraw from it several months later to establish, together with several colleagues, a "Free Workers Committee for a Good Peace" (Freien Arbeiterausschuss für einen Guten Frieden). The designation "Workers Committee" alone suggests that Drexler aimed at overcoming the Fatherland Party's major shortcoming: its lack of appeal to the working class.

Drexler's committee proclaimed itself in support of a "good peace" and opposed to racketeers and profiteers: "We stand behind Hindenburg, Ludendorff and our glorious army for final victory".² In the DAP platform of January, 1919, Germany's defeat was not mentioned, but "racketeers" and "profiteers" were more precisely defined as Jews.³ Although the DAP considered itself a genuine representative of the working class it was from the very beginning vehemently opposed to radical Socialism: "Zwischen Arbeiter und Proletarier soll ein scharfer Trennungsstrich gezogen werden...Wir kämpfen für Recht, wirkliche Freiheit und Glück. Keine Proletarierdiktatur!"⁴ After Hitler joined the party in October, 1919, those two enemies, Jews and extreme leftists, quite distinct in the Drexler platform, were joined into one: "Jewish-led

Bolshevism". A 1920 Hitler speech contains the following excerpt:

Und bei alldem kann man nun immer sehen, wie sie so wundervoll zusammenarbeiten, der Börsenjude und der Arbeiterführer, das Börsenorgan und die Arbeiterzeitung. Sie beide verfolgen eine Richtung und ein Ziel, ob Frankfurter Zeitung und Münchener Post, Berliner Tageblatt und Rote Freiheit oder Rote Fahne. Sie operieren wunderbar zusammen. Während der Syndikus Moses Kohn den Nacken seiner Gesellschaft steift, auf das sie den Forderungen ihrer Arbeiter möglichst starr, das heisst unbillig gegenübersteht, ist sein Bruder, der Arbeiterführer Isaak Kohn im Fabrikhof und hetzt die Massen auf: Da schaut sie an, sie wollen euch ja bloss unterdrücken! Werft die Ketten ab, usw. Und oben hilft sein Bruder mit, dass diese Ketten überhaupt geschmiedet werden.⁵

Anti-Semitism was by no means original with or monopolized by the DAP, later NSDAP, but the position which these ideas came to occupy in the Party ideology and the ruthless consistency with which this doctrine was put into practice became a hallmark of the National Socialists after Hitler assumed the leadership. In Hitler's mind the origins and the consequences of Germany's defeat were the sinister work of the Jewish race, the "wirepullers of history": "Der revolutionäre Jude macht die Revolution und zerstört alles; der Bankjude baut dann wieder auf, um sich seine Taschen zu füllen."⁶ Thus, the defeat was for him both an unspeakable catastrophe and a shocking revelation. Bolshevism was the ultimate, undisguised manifestation of the Jew: "The most frightful example of this kind is offered by Russia", Hitler wrote, "where he killed or starved about thirty million people with positively fanatical savagery, in part amid inhuman tortures, in order to give

a gang of Jewish journalists and stock exchange bandits domination over a great people." The intentions of international Jewry stood revealed for the ugly beast of Bolshevism had also raised its head in Germany: it sought to enslave and destroy Germany, Europe, and ultimately, the human race. To arouse the nation and snatch it out of the arms of mankind's most formidable enemy was the essence of his mission and the goal of his movement.⁷ Because Hitler was the man that hammered the NSDAP interpretation of the German collapse into its final form, and then used it to carry the Party out of the beer halls and into the streets, his views will remain the focal point of study.

When the war ended, Hitler, who had neither family, wife, friends, nor a job to return to, was once again threatened with the same meaningless existence he had led before the war began. For the next 1 1/2 years he simply remained in the Army.⁸ One thing, however, had changed: as a veteran Hitler enjoyed a status in society which he had hitherto not achieved. He exalted the war experience (Kriegserlebnis) accordingly, indeed, claiming it to be the prerequisite to political wisdom itself.⁹

Hitler returned to Bavaria after the war, a complete non-entity and was to remain one until after the Republic of Councils was overthrown. Henceforth the Reichswehr detachments stationed in Bavaria took it upon themselves to keep a close watch on all political activity in Munich with a particular view toward sniffing out left-wing organizations.¹⁰ It was as a political soldier that

the pale Austrian corporal first gained a measure of recognition.

The Reichswehrgruppenkommando IV, commanded by a certain Captain Mayr, under whom Hitler served, organized a short "enlightenment course" for the benefit of its own ranks and the instruction of soldiers returning from the east. In reality it was merely a reintroduction of the Ludendorff-styled "patriotic instruction". In addition to glorifying the German Army, this course was committed to the eradication of any Bolshevist ideas which returning prisoners of-war might have become imbued with. Hitler euphemistically referred to it as a program designed to provide those returning men with certain fundamentals of civic thinking.¹¹

Hitler excelled in this work and in July was promoted to "educational officer" on a camp established in Lechfeld not far from Munich.¹² His oratorical ability made a deep impression on the minds of many participants. A certain Lorenz Frank made the following notation concerning those lectures:

Besonders Herr Hitler ist, ich darf wohl sagen, ein geborener Volksredner, der durch sein populäres Auftreten in einer Versammlung die Zuhörer unbedingt zur Aufmerksamkeit und zum Mitdenken zwingt.¹³

Captain Mayr and his subordinates did not limit themselves to providing ideological instruction for returning troops, but also took on the role of political party "watchdog" in Munich. A wide range of political organizations, including Die Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei, Roter Soldatenbund, Schutz- und Trutzbund, Bayerrische Volkspartei, and even the small DAP all came under Army surveillance.¹⁴ On September, 12, Hitler, at the request of his superiors

attended a DAP meeting in a small Munich "pub".¹⁵ Several weeks later he joined the party and quickly became the committee member responsible for Party propaganda. With incredible energy and equal success Hitler hammered home his interpretation of the war, the defeat, the revolution and Treaty of Versailles, to rapidly growing crowds in Munich.

War and the affirmation of war was fundamental to Hitler's Weltanschauung. War belonged to the core of the great scheme of things and was not to be considered a violent interruption of civilization. Indeed, Hitler was convinced that culture, society, and mankind itself could only be saved if the will to fight were once again cultivated among the culture-bearing races of the world. To follow the "stern and rigid" laws of nature did therefore not mean that every man is pitted against every other man or that war was good for its own sake, instead it was a call to the strong, cultured races of the world to ward off and destroy the enemies of civilization and mankind as he defined them.¹⁶

Hitler's concepts of history and the laws of nature, needless to say, were crude and simplistic partly because the driving force behind his ideas were neither intellectual prowess or scientific curiosity but an unshakeable faith in the great, unique destiny of a National Socialist Germany under his leadership. The other side of this "faith" was an equally powerful conviction that the world was beset with the most sinister conspiracy in all of human history.¹⁷ His interest in history and the "laws of nature" was thus little

more than incidental rummaging for rudimentary, undifferentiated background material designed to substantiate preconceived ideas. Hitler's real concern and mental point of departure was World War I.

The origins of World War I, a question hotly debated after the war and even before the fighting had ended, presented Hitler's Weltanschauung with a curious dilemma.¹⁸ On the one hand he glorified those heroic war years which eclipsed everything that preceded them and on the other hand he could not deny that Germany had sustained enormous losses. Even the most fanatical warrior could not consider such unprecedented suffering as either "natural" or desirable. At one point he even suggested that Jews had fomented the outbreak of war in 1914,¹⁹ only to resolutely affirm a little farther on that a war could not have been avoided under any circumstances. "The struggle of the year 1914 was not forced on the masses - no, by the living God - it was desired by the whole people." ²⁰

Hitler's divided position on the origins of World War I also manifested itself in the "war guilt" debate (Kriegsschuldfrage).²¹ Although the NSDAP, like the other parties of Weimar Germany except the KPD, categorically rejected the notion that the Versailles Treaty, particularly article 231, was just, it approached the whole question from a different point of view. Hitler could not very well enter a debate which assumed that the outbreak of war, apart from what happened in the end, was in itself a catastrophe. The Versailles Treaty was in no way linked in his mind to the factors

surrounding the initial outbreak of hostilities. Imperial Germany was guilty, not for having perpetrated a war, but for having jeopardized the chances for victory with a wrong-headed foreign policy and a down-right myopic internal policy. In short, the outcome and not the origins of the war concerned him.

First, the old regime had made the mistake of being allied to the Austro-Hungarian "corpse" thereby forfeiting the freedom to strike at the most propitious moment. By committing itself to peace and the preservation of an empire on the verge of disintegration, Germany had harvested the enmity of all those who were eagerly anticipating its dissolution.²³ Moreover, the Social Democrats had accentuated an already catastrophic situation by carrying on a ceaseless campaign of denunciation against Tsarist Russia thus contributing to the encirclement of Germany.²⁴

Second, Hitler severely criticized Imperial Germany for having alienated Great Britain. Since Germany's natural sphere of influence and expansion was on the continent, Hitler held the old regime's economic and naval competition with Great Britain to have been a disastrous mistake.²⁵ Moreover, the German government, he maintained, had not realized that England had no other war aim in mind than to put an end to that destructive competition. What went beyond that was not in Britain's interest.²⁶ The focus on Great Britain as a natural enemy was an indication of the old regime's stupid foreign policy. England and Germany were natural allies; "only world Jewry can keep England hostile to Germany", Hitler wrote in 1928.²⁷

Finally, Imperial Germany's internal policies before and particularly during the war were, in Hitler's view, even more fatal than its foreign policy. In addition to being inadequately armed the government had also failed to insure that the war would be fought like the total war it was.²⁸ Subversive elements should not have been allowed to carry on their activities. Among the most insidious forces that went unbridled was the so-called liberal press. Under the protection of "freedom of the press" and the need for "popular education" the bourgeois-democratic papers undermined the war effort and poisoned the nation, Hitler maintained.²⁹ They injected pacifism into the heart of the nation and "was it not the German press which knew how to make the absurdity of "Western democracy" palatable to our people...? Did it not belittle the Army with constant criticism, sabotage, universal conscription, demand the refusal of military credits, etc., until the results became inevitable?"³⁰

Furthermore, the government had also failed to silence the Reichstag, a serious miscalculation in Hitler's opinion. The Reichstag was nothing more than a group of half-hearted trouble-makers and it ought to have been "brought to its senses, with bayonets if necessary, but, best of all, dissolved at once."³¹ As for the Burgfrieden Hitler simply noted that "while the honest ones were dreaming of peace within their borders, the perjuring criminals were organizing the revolution."³²

The deepest reason for the decline and catastrophic collapse of the old Reich, so reasoned Hitler, was its ignorance of and

failure to deal with the Marxist disease within the German nation.³³ Viewed through his eyes the final collapse was the last mighty blow delivered by this most Jewish of all plagues. Instead of having allowed the war to become a unique opportunity for the exploitation and destruction of the German people it ought to have served as a unique chance to settle accounts once and for all time with Jewish-led Marxism. A really nationalist government, Hitler insisted, would not have worshipped the idiocy of "law and order" while treason lurked at every street corner. On the contrary, it "should have desired turmoil and disorder had a principled reckoning with our nation's Marxist mortal enemies finally been possible and realized only out of such chaos".³⁴ In a declaration of grim intention he added: "If at the beginning of the war and during the war twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas, as happened to hundreds of thousands of our very best German soldiers in the field, the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain."³⁵ The will to annihilate Marxism root and branch, i.e., the Jewish race, was the first and last goal of Hitler's political will.

It is clear that Hitler's criticisms of Imperial Germany serve equally well as guideposts to the ideology and practice of National Socialism. That also held true for the way in which the NSDAP message was presented to the German people. Hitler accused the old Reich of having been shockingly ignorant of and hopelessly inept in

the realm of war propaganda. The German effort in that respect had been half-hearted and many-sided, completely without any real insight into the psychology of the masses. Enemy propaganda on the other hand had been extremely effective because it had limited itself to a few points, devised exclusively for mass consumption and carried on with indefatigable persistence.³⁶

The Americans and the English, by representing the Germans as Huns and barbarians, had prepared their soldiers for the terrors of war. After this, even the most dreadful weapon that was used against him could not break him but only reinforce what government propaganda had already told him.³⁷ Germany's internal Marxist-Socialist enemies too had mastered and skillfully applied the most effective propaganda techniques while the government and bourgeois parties, Hitler claimed, had remained totally oblivious of their real power. He carried those war-time lessons in propaganda into the post-war political arena and with tremendous success. That in itself is a telling commentary on the NSDAP; it carried the methods of war into peace-time politics.

In reviewing Adolf Hitler's criticisms of the old Reich nowhere can be found the slightest hint of sympathy or understanding for the very real grievances of the German people during World War I. That the Prussian electoral system was an insult to the hard-pressed workers and an outrageous humiliation of the soldier faced with death in his duty for a country which did not grant him equality in political rights,³⁸ was dismissed by Hitler in a few words: "What

did we care about universal suffrage? Had we fought four years for that?...The young regiments had not gone to their death in Flanders crying: 'Long live universal suffrage and the secret ballot', but crying: "Deutschland über alles in der Welt".³⁹

About the extravagant war aims of the Imperial government or the fatal military and political decisions of the supreme military command Hitler had nothing to say. No, the German Army, in his opinion, had been under the finest leadership in the world.⁴⁰ Hitler was not one of those who denied the military defeat, but he did resolutely refuse to admit that defeat in the fields of battle had anything to do with the German collapse. On the contrary, the "inner rottenness, cowardice, lack of character, in short, unworthiness" of the German people were the cause of the catastrophe. Military defeat would have been as nothing, he maintained, if it had not been the mere outward symptom of a deep inner decay, an ethical, moral and racial poisoning, which undermined the German instinct of self-preservation.⁴¹ What were manifestations of utter exhaustion and an intense longing for peace were interpreted by Hitler as indirect stabs-in-the-back; every protest, every shred of civil liberty, and certainly all the activities of radical socialists were construed to be malicious assaults on the faithful heroes at the front. Actions born of despair and hunger, Hitler, like Ludendorff, labelled treachery and sinister conspiracy.⁴²

Only the Army came in for praise by Hitler. This glorification of the German Army which had held its own against half the globe

for nearly four years appeared so much more deserved when viewed against the helplessness of the Weimar Republic. Hitler exalted the Army as the cornerstone and school of the nation,⁴³ no doubt in part because that institution's attitude toward Jews and Social Democrats was one of unmitigated hostility.⁴⁴ No reference can be found in Hitler's writings and speeches regarding the aristocratic élitism of that much-adored Prussian Army.⁴⁵ Instead he emphasized the feeling of comradeship and equality among all German soldiers during the war. When Hitler talked about the Prussian Army or even "Germany" he meant the Prussian Army or the Germany of World War I. Those terms were not linked to the history and traditions of the nation and whatever references he made to tradition and German history were more or less the fruits of imagination, a combination of "Kriegserlebnis" and "Wunschvorstellungen". This perhaps explains why conservatives were so susceptible to National Socialism; they both employed the same rhetoric but with different meanings. In fact, the interpretation of the "November Revolution" as the "stab-in-the-back", meant one thing to the NSDAP and quite another to the DNVP.

Long before Hitler attended the first meeting of the DAP in September 1919, the tumult about the "Dolchstoß" had already begun.⁴⁶ Ludendorff's war-time and post-war time version aside, the first political party to cry out against the founders of the Republic, charging them with having criminally stabbed an undefeated army in the back, were the German Nationalists.⁴⁷ Their

first concern was the threat to their property and position of power in German society. It is therefore not surprising that the Conservatives looked upon the parliamentary reforms which preceded the cessation of hostilities and the abdication of the emperor as a treacherous and revolutionary move on behalf of the Reichstag majority.⁴⁸ Once it became apparent that the revolution had neither deprived them of their property, much less their heads, they regrouped under a new name and launched bitter verbal attacks against the founding parties of the Weimar Republic, particularly the Social Democrats. The old disputes had merely subsided for a brief moment during the Spartacist uprising and were renewed again as if no revolution had occurred.

But the German Nationalists, for all their attempts to unload the responsibility of Germany's defeat and the Versailles Treaty on someone else's shoulders, never managed to appear free of guilt themselves. Where were they when the foundations of the old regime began to shake? To call the revolution the greatest revolution of all time was a shrill but hollow excuse.⁴⁹ The very fact that the DNVP could lash out at the so-called revolutionaries in the Reichstag was proof enough to the contrary. Moreover, the German Nationalists were sitting in that Reichstag during those days in late June, 1919, when Germany was compelled to sign the Versailles Treaty.

Hitler and the NSDAP, on the other hand, were in no way identified with the collapse and its consequences and thus treated the

DNVP and their kind with thinly veiled derision. These "old patriots", as Hitler was wont to call them, "are the very same poltroons who in 1919 scattered and ran from every red armband, ...exchanged the halberd for the walking stick, put on noncommittal neckties, and vanished without a trace as peaceful "citizens".⁵⁰ Although both the NSDAP and the DNVP ranted and raved about the "November criminals" and the Versailles Treaty only the latter was capable of the following naiveté: "Die Kriegsschuldlüge", wrote the German Nationalist Hamburger Tageblatt on May 8, 1922, "ist der einzige und der letzte Rechtfertigungsschein der Revolution und der Republik. Fällt sie hin, fällt nicht nur der Friede von Versailles, sondern auch das Recht des 9. November."⁵¹ Hitler was much more cunning and therefore turned his propagandistic tirades against Berlin, a much more vulnerable and accessible target. Only he was capable of admitting military defeat and at the same time maintaining that such a defeat had nothing to do with the "Schandfrieden" of Versailles!⁵²

For all its omissions and inverted logic, Hitler's explanations of the defeat, the revolution and the Versailles Treaty, were eagerly listened to and believed. Many Germans accepted one or another version of the "Dolchstoß" lie because they simply could not accept the fact that the nation, once proud and glorious, had been defeated and humiliated in spite of all the sacrifices and all those "victories". They looked for culprits and Hitler knew how to point them out! In that respect World War I fitted into anti-Semitic thought just as neatly as it fitted into Marxist thought.⁵³

The "enemy" in NSDAP rhetoric had only one face but many masks: Berlin, the Weimar Republic, international Jewry, Bolshevism, etc. In the early period the NSDAP regularly declared Berlin a Jewish nest and the Weimar republicans "November criminals". In short, Hitler's interpretation of the German collapse was an unambiguous declaration of war against the entire Weimar "system".⁵⁴ The National Socialists conducted themselves accordingly.

Of all the belligerent rhetoric to be heard in post-war Germany, none could equal that of Hitler for sheer passion and violence. Even the forceful proclamations which the Spartacists had earlier introduced into the political arena paled when compared with the tidal wave of abuse which the National Socialists unleashed. His speeches were always carefully staged and well protected.⁵⁵ Hitler's style was unique: a packed auditorium usually waited for some time before he appeared, then pale, nervous, and with notes in hand he would begin. The first few sentences were quiet and uncertain, after which he gradually warmed up to the subject and the applause until finally, amid ecstatic cheering, words rushed from the podium like a torrent.⁵⁶ Hitler abided no heckling and permitted no discussion or questioning whatsoever. As early as February, 1920, Hitler had Social Democratic workers who attempted to disrupt an NSDAP meeting brutally beaten by armed National Socialists bearing whips, rubber truncheons and life preservers.⁵⁷

Much later the Führer recalled that those tactics had been employed in order that political opponents, who would otherwise have disregarded NSDAP meetings, would sit up and take notice of them.⁵⁸

Not only were the NSDAP meetings "ungemein ruhig", but discussion or debate itself was strictly ruled out. A Völkischer Beobachter summary of a 1922 party meeting concluded with the following remarks:

Die Ausführungen Hitlers wurden mit stürmischem Beifall aufgenommen. Zur Diskussion meldete sich niemand, da nationalsozialistische Versammlungen, wie Drexler meinte, nicht der Ort sind, wo man Unwahrheiten sagen kann.⁵⁹

Hitler carried his rough-neck tactics beyond the mere brutal eviction of hecklers and deliberately had his men disrupt the meetings of political opponents. Publicity was a leading motive in the employment of such tactics. "If people had attacked us in those days," Hitler later wrote, "yes, even if they had laughed at us, in both cases we should have been happy."⁶⁰ The SA (Sturmabteilung), by acting as riot-police at party functions, standard bearers in the streets, and shock troops against "Marxist" opponents, made sure that the emerging National Socialist Party would not go unnoticed.

The SA was Hitler's own creation. Initially it was composed of men, usually ex-soldiers and comrades, whose duty it was to keep order at NSDAP meetings. It soon grew to be a miniature private army. Germany, and especially Bavaria, had a host of

large and small para-military organizations, most of which sprang up in place of the forbidden Einwohnerwehren.⁶¹ The latter were volunteer troops similar to the Free Corps units which were used to crush Spartacist revolts internally and defend the eastern borders of Germany against the Poles and the Bolsheviks during the critical years from the end of the war to 1921.⁶² The NSDAP welcomed the former fighters of Bolshevism into the Party. The compulsory dissolution of the Free Corps and Einwohnerwehren was a godsend for the National Socialists. It embittered large numbers of men for whom fighting had become a way of life. Psychologically unable to demobilize and deeply antagonistic toward Berlin, they made ideal SA recruits.⁶³ Hitler provided these men with a sense of political purpose and plenty of action, in addition to flags, drums, armbands, and somewhat later, uniforms.

The more respectable war veteran was more likely to be attracted by sentimental, "for old times sake" organizations like the Stahlhelm.⁶⁴ Although the Stahlhelm initially set out to put an end to "die Schweinerei der Revolution", it soon evolved into a large, beer-drinking, politically inactive body of conservative, nationalist-minded, old soldiers.⁶⁵ They were anti-republican, but not rabble rousers, patriotic, but not fanatical like the NSDAP.

Hitler was on the look-out for tough types, men for whom violence was standard fare. The Free Corps fellows were by and large not seasoned in the Prussian tradition but neither were they of bourgeois mentality. They sought a leader at once opposed to the Weimar Republic and Bolshevism with the will to fight. They found

Hitler who in turn led them into the streets of Bavaria like an army. As SA standard-bearers of a new nationalism these men were motivated by ideals quite different from the Prussian Army they professed to emulate. Historical patriotism was replaced by a "Blutromantik", ⁶⁶ force was used not to protect the nation but to build an exclusive nation within a nation. Moreover, they were not polished, impeccably dressed soldiers, but rather dishevelled, lower class types. Hitler needed those men: "Such elements," he later remarked, "are unusable in times of peace, but in turbulent periods it's quite different...With what blind confidence they followed me! Fundamentally they were just overgrown children."⁶⁷ For them, the "Kriegserlebnis" remained the focal point of their lives,⁶⁸ and they never outgrew it.

Conservative, reactionary Bavaria was a haven for these "Männer der Tat". In Bavaria the doctrine of violence, provided it came from the right, and the methods of political terror, provided they were directed against the left, met with official indifference if not outright approval. Only bourgeois Bavaria's profound fear and hatred of "Bolshevism" in the aftermath of the Räterepublik can account for what really amounted to legalized injustice.⁶⁹

The man who set the pace in Bavaria during the years which finally culminated in the "Hitler-Ludendorff Putsch" was Dr. Gustav von Kahr.⁷⁰ Dr. Kahr's support came chiefly from the Bavarian Peoples Party, the Farmers Association (Bauernbund), and many right-

wing militants among whom he had gained recognition for his role in organizing volunteer battles units during the turbulent post-war months. As a fervent monarchist he was vehemently opposed to the revolution and the system of government that emerged from it. His antipathy for the Weimar Republic was such that he openly prided himself with not having read the constitution. Indeed he even refused to read the new Bavarian constitution: "Ich lese sie nicht, erst die nächste lese ich."⁷¹

Two fundamental problems determined the direction of the Kahr administration in 1920-1921: Bavaria's relationship to Berlin and the Einwohnerwehren question. Because the Einwohnerwehren were hostile toward Berlin and influential in Munich these two problems were inextricably linked.⁷² In 1920, Germany and the Entente Powers reached an agreement at Spa according to which all armed units, including the Einwohnerwehren, were to be disbanded. Kahr protested vehemently and simply refused to carry out the order. His delaying tactics, however, met with disaster for in June, 1921, the central government under the direction of Chancellor Wirth⁷³ in accordance with the London Ultimatum forced the dissolution of the Einwohnerwehren.⁷⁴

The assassinations of both Matthias Erzberger in August, 1921, and Walter Rathenau, Wirth's right-hand man and Foreign Minister, less than a year later, provoked a new round of tensions between Munich and Berlin. Immediately following the death of Erzberger President Friedrich Ebert ordered special measures to be introduced under Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. This empowered

authorities throughout the Reich to temporarily censor and ban if necessary all political associations, newspapers, and rallies encouraging disobedience and acts of violence.⁷⁵ The Bavarian government refused to comply with the federal order with the result that Kahr and his government resigned.⁷⁶ Although the central government appeared to have scored a victory against the reactionaries of Bavaria that was more appearance than reality. The NSDAP itself flourished more than ever.⁷⁷

Graf Hugo Lerchenfeld succeeded Kahr as Prime Minister and pledged to continue the same political course that his predecessor had followed. Nevertheless, with Pöhner and Frick,⁷⁸ formerly responsible for the Munich Police Department, gone it was not quite so easy for the radical right-wingers to continue their illegal activities with impunity. Hitler was threatened with deportation in March, 1922. Nothing came of it because the Lerchendorf government did not dare alienate the nationalist, para-military organizations. Just how self-confident the NSDAP felt is evidenced by the retaliatory attack they staged, disrupting a meeting of the Bavarian People's Party at which Dr. Schweyer, Minister of Interior, spoke.⁷⁹

The second major crisis between Berlin and Bavaria followed the brutal assassination on June 24, 1922, of Walter Rathenau. President Ebert, faced with the unacceptable lengths to which the extreme rightists were prepared to go, ordered a sharpened version of the "law for the protection of the Republic" to come into effect.

The Bavarian government once again refused to comply. Considerable pressure was brought to bear on Lerchendorf by the militant nationalists not to obey the central authorities since the new federal legislation also included an order forbidding planned demonstrations for June 28. On that day right-wing nationalists were hoping to stage huge protest demonstrations as their way of "celebrating" the third anniversary of the Versailles Treaty signing. In defiance of Berlin, the Bavarian government introduced its own legislation instead. Tension steadily mounted until finally Lerchendorf too was compelled to resign from office in November, 1922.⁸⁰

Thus, while the authorities in Munich were bearing the brunt of battle with Berlin and losing power and prestige in the process those whom they were shielding, chief among which were the National Socialists, reaped all the benefits. That is all the more significant in view of the fundamental differences which separated the Bavarian Prime Ministers and Adolf Hitler. Whereas Kahr, Lerchendorf, and his successor, von Knilling, in turn attempted to assert themselves to the point of separatism, the NSDAP vigorously opposed both monarchism and separatism. Hitler carried on his political warfare at the expense of Berlin, and moreover, at the expense of those who in their shortsightedness considered him a right-wing helper.

This shortsightedness was especially apparent in the weeks following Lerchendorf's resignation. In recognition of the powerful movement Hitler was leading, the Bavarian Minister of Interior, Dr. Schweyer, called a meeting to discuss an approach to the NSDAP.⁸¹

That discussion was quickly carried over into the state assembly. There a certain Democratic representative, Pius Dirr, bitterly criticized National Socialist political practice and in doing so made some very perceptive remarks:

..."die ungeheure Hetze, die getrieben wird gegen die Juden...Ein törichter Wahn, zu glauben, am deutschesten sei derjenige, der den Rassenhass zum obersten Gebot allen politischen Handelns macht."⁸²

Dr. Schweyer for his part noted that although the NSDAP was employing terroristic, fascistic tactics, it was, nevertheless, fighting Marxism and therefore could still be considered part of the greater "fatherland" movement, a movement which he held to be solid and healthy at its core.⁸³ Moreover, Schweyer felt that NSDAP demands for the abolition of the Versailles Treaty and the establishment of a people's army could only be applauded. Thus, despite some "unfortunate excesses", to quote the Minister of Interior's euphemistic terminology, the Bavarian government was not convinced that any action should be taken against the NSDAP.⁸⁴ Erhard Auer, leader of the United Socialists in the Bavarian Landtag, saw the situation much more clearly:

Durch ihren Terror, begünstigt durch die Passivität der Staatsorgane, bedroht sie heute die öffentliche Sicherheit...Sie [NSDAP] schickt sich an, durch bewaffnete Sturm-Trupps die verfassungsmässigen Bindungen aufzuheben und eine Diktatur ihrer gewalttätigen Leute aufzurichten...⁸⁵

Long before the Hitler-Ludendorff Putsch was carried out the responsible authorities had warning enough as to the nature and goals of the National Socialists. Why was nothing done? Certainly the

NSDAP, although in command of considerable SA forces, could have been brought to heel had the government acted with determination. But so blinded were the leaders of Bavaria, from the Prime Minister on down, by their fear of the Left and their hostility toward Berlin that they felt much closer to Hitler than to the victims of SA terror. Since the Social Democrats were the primary targets of NSDAP attacks and since Kahr and his successors hated the Socialists with a vengeance, pleas for justice fell on deaf ears.⁸⁶ Moreover, the Army was arm in arm with the extreme Right, and in 1923 that became painfully apparent.

In that year Germany experienced the wildest inflation in its history, a second French invasion of the Ruhr, and several serious threats to its national unity. In 1923 there were renewed threats of Communist uprisings and once again the impasse between Berlin and Munich reached crisis proportions. In short, it was an excellent year for the NSDAP. The Party flourished in those tumultuous and turbulent times. Hitler's grim prophecies vis à vis the Versailles "Diktat" and the enslavement of Germany appeared much more credible at a time when foreign troops were in occupation of German soil and the German economy itself was on the verge of total collapse. In his mind it was another act in the drama that had opened with the "November crime". Any counteraction directed against the "Judenrepublik" in Berlin, he reasoned, could therefore be condoned, indeed encouraged, or as the Völkischer Beobachter observed during the height of the crisis, "Ruhe und Ordnung sind keine poli-

tischen Ideale, für die es wert wäre, auch nur einen kleinen Finger zu rühren."⁸⁷

On January 11, 1923, French soldiers invaded the Ruhr in retaliation for an alleged failure on behalf of Germany to honour a minor point in the reparations agreement. A wave of indignation swept across Germany. So intense was the sense of outrage that parties as deeply divided as the Social Democrats and the German Nationalists were prepared to join hands in a common front. A national united front dedicated to passive resistance was organized and right-wing nationalist groups across the country rallied behind it. Even Ludendorff and Röhm considered the French threat serious enough to declare themselves in favour of an internal "Burgfrieden".⁸⁸ Hitler's response, however, was strikingly different from that of other nationalists. Only after the internal traitors had been side-lined, he stubbornly insisted, could anything of consequence be undertaken against foreign foes. In a mass meeting, held the day after the invasion of the Ruhr, he made that absolutely clear: "Nicht nieder mit Frankreich, sondern nieder mit den Vaterlandsverrättern, nieder mit den Novemberverbrechern muss es heissen!"⁸⁹

Hitler's reaction, heretical even from the point of view of some of the most fanatical enemies of Berlin, is of some significance. Perhaps he may have suspected from the beginning that passive resistance was bound to be an exercise in futility. In any case, he knew that NSDAP support of a united front would allow

his SA to melt away into the ranks of larger organizations. For him to throw his men and himself behind the nebulous, united national front would have cost him his uniqueness - he would have become a nonentity among other nationalists. Moreover, Hitler knew that leading his men in street fights in the towns and cities of Bavaria was politically much more remunerative. The French were too big, too far away, too unapproachable an enemy. Hitler kept his sights on Berlin instead; his verbal attacks, if anything, increased in intensity during the Ruhr crisis, partly because potential allies and recruits were drawn toward the national united front:

In all dem Geflunker und Geschwätz von Einheitsfront haben wir nicht zu vergessen, dass sich zwischen uns und die Volksbetrüger, Arbeiterverführer und bürgerlichen Parteiverbrecher 2 Millionen Tote schieben. Die Beseitigung der Führer wäre nicht Bürgerkrieg, sondern ein gerechtes Strafgericht, denn wir müssen endlich einmal einen Unterschied zwischen Staatsbürgern und Schweinehunden machen. Wir können keine Führer dulden, die Hochverräter sind, keinen Präsidenten, der selbst ein Hochverräter ist.⁹⁰

Hitler, like Ludendorff and his Fatherland Party supporters in the latter stages of the war, was far more obsessed with the "internal enemy" than with an overpowering, foreign foe. This obsession was the most consequent expression of his adamant refusal to accept the defeat.

The immediate reaction to the radical position taken by the NSDAP on the occasion of the French invasion of the Ruhr was one of alarm and surprise. Bavarian authorities, finding the National

Socialist stand not to their liking, retaliated by forbidding the first National Socialist Party Congress, scheduled for the end of January, 1923. Thereupon Captain Ernst Röhm, Hitler's key man in the Reichswehr, went straight to the Commandant of the Bavarian garrisons, General von Lossow, who in turn interceded on behalf of the NSDAP, so that the suspension was lifted.⁹¹

As Hitler was dependent on Reichswehr support, these events made him all the more concerned about the SA, and his control over it. The Ruhr invasion was in that respect fraught with danger since it tended to draw nationalist, para-military organizations together in common cause with the Army.⁹² His caution is clearly evident in a written command issued to the various local SA leaders by Hermann Göring. In it the district "Hundreds" (Hundertschaften) were urged to maintain their connections with the Army for purposes of training and instruction, provided that the following warning be kept in mind: "irgendwelche Verpflichtungen werden nicht eingegangen... Sache des Oberkommandos ist es, dafür zu sorgen, dass wir zur rechten Zeit im rechten Geist, im Geist unserer Führer, eingesetzt werden."⁹³

By September, 1923, the political and economic crisis had reached a peak:⁹⁴ Inflation was uncontrollable, Communist uprisings and disturbances had taken place in Dortmund, Mühlheim, Gelsenkirchen, Gleiwitz and Breslau in the preceding months, a state of emergency had been declared by President Ebert on August 10, and finally in September, separatist demonstrations in the

Rhineland cities of Cologne, Trier, Wiesbaden, and Düsseldorf, were threatening the unity of the nation.⁹⁵ When the German government finally decided to abandon the futile and self-destructive passive resistance campaign against France extreme nationalists once again directed their frustration and wrath against Berlin. They reacted as if Germany had lost another war. Hitler emerged greatly strengthened and his "down with the November criminals" position of January now appeared prophetic. The Völkischer Beobachter proudly proclaimed on September 26: "Die Folge der Berliner Kapitulation -- Adolf Hitler erhält die gesamte politische Leitung der Kampfverbände!"⁹⁶ The Ruhr, it continued, was again the victim of a "stab-in-the-back" engineered by the "November criminals".

On the fifth anniversary of the November Revolution, Hitler, in concert with Ludendorff, attempted a "march on Berlin" after the fashion of Mussolini's "march on Rome". It was an impulsive, rather ill-conceived attempt to erect a National Socialist dictatorship in Berlin. Bavarian authorities, however, had to be reckoned with before the march could begin. There was v. Kahr, recently appointed to the powerful position of Generalstaatskommissar, who, although a devoted separatist, was nevertheless not prepared to confront Berlin with force head-on. On November 8 Hitler made his move, catching v. Kahr, Lossow and the Chief of Police, Colonel Seisser at a political rally in the Munich Bürgerbräukeller. Hitler convinced them with words, troops and a

revolver to join in the putsch. Seisser, Kahr and Lossow, however, took counter measures as soon as they were allowed to leave the building. On the following day police and troops stood ready to confront several thousand National Socialists, many of them armed, and led by Ludendorff and Hitler. A brief skirmish ensued in which sixteen of Hitler's followers were shot. The self-proclaimed dictator fled and was arrested two days later not far from Munich.⁹⁷ But, paradoxically, it was also a victory for Hitler and the NSDAP who had managed to focus national and international attention on events in Bavaria. Moreover, the National Socialists now had its own martyrs, men who had died for their cause. Hitler, who conceived of the Party as a movement motivated by a new "faith", had these men enveloped in an aura of secular sainthood. A whole ritual surrounded the anniversary of the Putsch in subsequent years; the leading National Socialist standard, later christened the Blutfahne, became a sacred relic of the Hitler "faith". On great Party festivals this "blood banner" was used to initiate new standards into the Party. It was, so to speak, the National Socialist rite of baptism.

The trial itself was something of a farce. One of its most remarkable features was the leniency and mildness of the judges toward men accused of treason. Hitler, only one of ten charged with the same crime, under these circumstances managed very quickly to steal and hold the centre stage in the court. He stepped into the floodlights by announcing at the very outset that he alone was responsible for what had happened.⁹⁸ Ultimately, he adamantly

insisted that he could not be considered a criminal or a revolutionary, unless as one who was a revolutionary against the "revolution". Yet it should not be imagined that Hitler had clear sailing from start to finish. On several occasions his fellow accused, particularly Lossow, poured scorn on Hitler's messianic self-image and, at one point, added that the latter lacked a sense of reality and the capacity for perceiving what was within the realm of the possible.⁹⁹ But Hitler also managed to get in his licks against Lossow, and, finally, in the closing speech of the trial established himself as lord and master over the court. He reminded his listeners that for four years he had marched shoulder to shoulder with the soldiers of Germany, a point legally irrelevant but politically very astute. Then in a last, grand, rhetorical flourish he dismissed the court itself as a mere group of shortsighted mortals quite incapable of passing judgement on his actions:

...jenes Gericht wird über uns richten, über den Generalquartiermeister der alten Armee, über seine Offiziere und Soldaten, die als Deutsche das Beste gewollt haben für ihr Volk und Vaterland, die kämpfen und sterben wollten.¹⁰⁰ Mögen sie uns tausendmal schuldig sprechen, die Göttin des ewigen Gerichts der Geschichte wird lächelnd den Antrag des Staatsanwalts und das Urteil des Gerichtes zerreißen, denn sie spricht uns frei.¹⁰¹

It was this unshakeable faith in the rightness of his cause that drew more and more people, in a time when Germany had lost its bearings and its sense of direction and purpose, to follow this simple soldier who promised to undo the chains of defeat. Even as Hitler

stood in the dock awaiting sentence he spoke of the "remnant" that was daily drawing unto itself disciples, and of the time to come when those few would grow to battalions, the battalions to regiments, the regiments to divisions, until at last the old flags would wave again. At the last there would be a day of reconciliation and a great divine judgement which, he assured the court, he was prepared to face.¹⁰²

How fitting his choice of words! The NSDAP indeed was an army, symbolically and otherwise, built around a Messiah and his remnant of "undefeated" soldiers.¹⁰³ First there was to be a gathering of the elect, a great day of reckoning with the "evil one" (Jewish-led Marxism), and then the millenium (thousand year Reich).¹⁰⁴ If the last remnant of the "Aryan" race, the fountainhead of everything that was to be admired on earth - science and the arts, technology and invention - should fall prey to the demonic hosts, so ran Hitler's apocalyptic thought, the whole world would sink down into chaos.¹⁰⁵ If, however, Germany should free itself from the deadly embrace of Jewry, the greatest danger for all peoples could be regarded as vanguished from the earth. Then the Prometheus of the world would, in a mighty struggle, banish the Jew back to Lucifer! It is noteworthy that both National Socialism and Communism, the most deadly of enemies, were at the same time quite similar in their doctrines of the end time. In Hitler's apocalypse the "Aryan" race was to restore the natural order of the world by exterminating the "Jewish race", while in the Communist apocalypse the "proletariat" was the chosen class destined to annihilate the accursed "bourgeoisie".¹⁰⁶ One ideology stormed

about capitalism as if it were the Antichrist, while the other considered world-wide "Jewry" equally pernicious. Both were children, so to speak, of the calamities of war and the chaos of defeat.

For Hitler the German collapse was Janus-like: a dreadful unfolding of sinister forces and events, and a "Damascus road" experience. Already in Mein Kampf he noted that the collapse, although a terrible catastrophe, might well be considered a blessing in disguise. Without it, he thought, Germany would have gone to the dogs more slowly, but all the more certainly: "the disease would have become chronic, while in the acute form of the collapse it at least became clearly and distinctly recognizable to a considerable number of people."¹⁰⁷ The defeat: a revelation to the "remnant".¹⁰⁸

The Remnant-Defeat as Revelation

¹An Austrian DAP had been in existence since 1904. Although there were no formal organizational links between the Austrian DAP and the party founded by Drexler, their ideological similarities were unmistakable. The Austrian DAP was both revolutionary in its social and economic demands, and radically opposed to Marxism. It was a movement dedicated to the maintenance and enlargement of Germanic Lebensraum. In addition, the Austrian DAP was violently anti-Semitic. (Andrew G. Whiteside, Austrian National Socialism Before 1918 [The Hague, 1962], pp. 100 f.)

²Werner Master, Die Frühgeschichte der NSDAP - Hitlers Weg bis 1924 (Frankfurt, 1965), p. 144.

³Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 3, pp. 212-214.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ernst Nolte, Der Faschismus von Mussolini zu Hitler-Texte, Bilder und Dokumente (Munich, 1968), p. 73.

⁶Documentation by Reginald H. Philips: "Hitler als Parteiredner im Jahre 1920", Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte, vol. II (1963), pp. 322-24.

⁷Ibid., p. 65.

⁸Max Domarus, ed., Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen, 1932-1945, vol. I, (Munich, 1962), pp. 645-647.

⁹Ernst Deuerlein, "Hitlers Eintritt in die Politik und die Reichswehr", Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte, VII (1959), pp. 177-227; Georg Franz-Willing, Die Hitlerbewegung: Der Ursprung 1919-1922 (Hamburg and Berlin), 1962.

¹⁰Mein Kampf, p. 356.

¹¹Maser, p. 133.

¹²Mein Kampf, p. 215.

¹³Deuerlein, p. 195.

¹⁴Maser, p. 139.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 153-54.

¹⁶Mein Kampf, pp. 217 f. The meeting was held in the "Leiber Room" of the Sterneckerbräu in Munich. (Ibid.)

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 284 f.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 288.

¹⁹The "war guilt" question was the subject of many heated exchanges in the Reichstag. C.F. Herman Kantorowicz, Gutachten zur Kriegsschuldfrage 1914 (Frankfurt, 1967), esp. the Introduction by Immanuel Geiss; also Thimme, p. 85.

²⁰Mein Kampf, p. 147.

²¹Ibid., pp. 160-61.

²²Fritz Dickmann, "Die Kriegsschuldfrage auf der Friedenskonferenz von Paris 1919", Historische Zeitschrift, vol. 197 (1963), pp. 94 f.

²³Mein Kampf, pp. 147-148, 160.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., p. 140.

²⁶Ibid., p. 616 f.

²⁷Adolf Hitler, Hitler's Secret Book, Introd. by Telford Taylor (New York, 1961), p. 159.

²⁸Mein Kampf, p. 272 f.

²⁹Ibid., p. 242 f.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., p. 169

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., p. 283.

³⁴Ibid., p. 680.

³⁵Ibid., p. 679.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 184-185.

³⁷Ibid., p. 181.

³⁸Nolte, The Three Faces of Fascism, p. 313.

³⁹Mein Kampf, p. 199.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 229.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 229-231.

⁴²Nolte, The Three Faces of Fascism, p. 306. C.f. also Erich

Ludendorff, Kriegsführung und Politik (Munich, 1923), p. 331.

⁴³Mein Kampf, p. 281.

⁴⁴The Prussian army discriminated against Jews and by 1910 had excluded all Jews from the Officer Corps. (Martin Kitchen, The German Officer Corps 1890-1914. [Oxford, 1968], esp. ch.2; "The Social Structure of the Officer Corps and the Issue of Anti-Semitism", pp. 22-48.)

⁴⁵Kitchen notes (p. 22) that in 1914, 30% of the officers in the Prussian army were aristocrats.

⁴⁶Instructive for the development and history of the Dolchstoß myth is the study by Joachim Petzold, Die Dolchstoßlegende: Eine Geschichtsfälschung im Dienst des deutschen Imperialismus (Berlin, 1963).

⁴⁷Thimme, esp. ch. 2, "Die 'Unbesiegten' gegen die 'Verräter' der Nation oder Der Mythos des Dolchstosses gegen den Mythos der Revolution", pp. 76-95.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 78-79.

⁴⁹C.f. Kreuzzeitung, 12. November 1918: "Wir stehen noch mitten in einer Umwälzung, wie sie die Geschichte noch nicht gesehen hat". Cited by Thimme, p. 165 (see above footnote 20). The Berliner Tageblatt on November 10, 1918, shared that view: "Die grösste aller Revolutionen hat wie ein plötzlich losbrechender Sturmwind das kaiserliche Regime mit allem, was oben und unten dazu gehörte, gestürzt. Man kann sie die grösste aller Revolutionen nennen, weil niemals eine so fest gebaute, mit so soliden Mauern umgebene Bastille so in einem Anlauf genommen worden ist. ...Vieles erinnerte an Zeichnungen der alten französischen Revolutionsmaler, ein Schauspiel für Nervenschwache war es mitunter nicht". (Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 3, pp. 10-11).

⁵⁰Mein Kampf, p. 239.

⁵¹Kantorowicz, p. 419.

⁵²Hitler als Parteiredner im Jahre 1920, pp. 320-322.

⁵³Petzold, p. 28.

⁵⁴Hitler succinctly justified this call to arms against the Weimar Republic in Mein Kampf: "Only the elimination of the causes of our collapse, as well as the destruction of its beneficiaries, can create the premise for our outward fight for freedom". (Mein Kampf, p. 609).

⁵⁵Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism, p. 365.

⁵⁶Erhard Klöss, ed., Reden des Führers: Politik und Propaganda Adolf Hitlers 1922-1945. (Munich, 1967), p. 16.

⁵⁷Wilhelm Hoegner, Der Schwierige Aussenseiter (Munich, 1959), p. 18.

⁵⁸Hitlers Secret Conversations, 1941-1944, ed. H.R. Trevor-Roper (New York, 1953), pp. 392-4.

⁵⁹Völkischer Beobachter, 1. November, 1922. Hereafter cited as VB.

⁶⁰Mein Kampf, p. 353.

⁶¹The Einwohnerwehren were organized by one Dr. Escherich in 1919 and soon had branches all across Germany. By 1920 it numbered more than 300,000 members. It was forced to disband at the insistence of the Entente Powers in June 1921, (Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 5, pp. 340-44).

⁶²Robert G.L. White, Vanguard of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement in Postwar Germany, 1918-1923. (New York, Norton Library, 1969), pp. 33-40. An invaluable contemporaneous source is Ernst von Salomon, Die Geächteten (Berlin, 1930).

⁶³Franz-Willing, p. 137.

⁶⁴Volker R. Berghahn, Der Stahlhelm Bund der Frontsoldaten, 1918-1935. (Düsseldorf, 1966), pp. 22 f.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 13 f.

⁶⁶Bracher, p. 172.

⁶⁷Hitler's Secret Conversations, p. 126.

⁶⁸A most powerful description of these men is found in Ernst von Salomon's Die Geächteten, p. 71. "Der Krieg hatte sie noch nicht ent-

lassen. Der Krieg hatte sie geformt, er liess ihre geheimsten Stüchte wie Funken durch die Kruste schlagen, er hatte ihrem Leben einen Sinn gegeben, ihren Einsatz geheiligt. Ungebärdige, Ungebändigte waren sie, Ausgestossene aus der Welt der bürgerlichen Normen, Versprengte, die sich in kleinen Gruppen sammelten, ihre Front zu suchen...."

⁶⁹Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 5, pp. 333-38.

⁷⁰Karl Schwend, Bayern zwischen Monarchie und Diktatur: Beiträge zur Bayerischen Frage in der Zeit von 1918-1933 (Munich, 1954), pp. 143 f.

⁷¹Franz-Willing, p. 199.

⁷²Ibid., p. 200.

⁷³Joseph Wirth belonged to the Center Party. He was Chancellor from May 1920, to November 1922.

⁷⁴Franz-Willing, pp. 203-4.

⁷⁵Schwend, p. 171 f.

⁷⁶Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 4, p. 194, fn. 5. The National Socialist response to the murder of Erzberger read: "Erzberger ist leider tot, Wirth und Rathenau leben noch". Wilhelm Hoegner, Die Verratene Republik (Munich, 1958), p. 109. Die Kreuzzeitung wrote: "...nichts ist billiger als die Täter, deren Motive noch unbekannt sind, zu schmähen". (Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 4, p. 194).

⁷⁷Franz-Willing, p. 205.

⁷⁸The kind of men Ernst Pöhner and Dr. Wilhelm Frick, respectively Chief of Police and head of the Police Presidium under Kahr, were is

readily apparent from Hitler's assessment of them. Hitler, cautious as he was when it came to acknowledging indebtedness, declared in Mein Kampf (pp. 367-68) that the Munich Police Department under Pöhner and Frick had truly been "German" first and bureaucratic second. Pöhner and Frick for their part left no doubt as to where their loyalties lay. During the Hitler-Ludendorff trial in 1924 they related before the court that they had indeed shielded Hitler's movement "weil wir in ihr den Keim einer Erneuerung Deutschlands sahen, weil wir von Anfang an die Überzeugung hatten, dass die Bewegung diejenige ist, die geeignet wäre, in der marxistisch ver-seuchten Arbeiterschaft wieder festen Fuss zu fassen und die Arbeiter-schaft ins nationale Lager zurückzuführen". Cited by Franz-Willing, p. 201.

⁷⁹Franz-Willing, p. 214. The National Socialists responded to Lerchenfeld's threat to have Hitler deported with a typically bar-baric statement: "Wenn Hitler ausgewiesen wird, verrecken die Juden in München pfundweise". (Ibid.).

⁸⁰Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 4, Doc. 919, 919a.

⁸¹Franz-Willing, p. 222.

⁸²Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 5, pp. 373-74.

⁸³Ibid., pp. 374-75. Although Dr. Schweyer's antipathy for "Marxism" made him typically tolerant of right-wing extremism he did recognize the factors that made the Hitler movement possible: "Die natürliche Erklärung dieser Bewegung liegt in dem traurigen Ausgange des Krieges, vor allem in der Entwaffnung, in den Folgewirkungen der Revolution, in dem unerhörten aussenpolitischen Drucke...". (Ibid.)

⁸⁴Ibid., vol. 5, pp. 418-19.

⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 423-25.

⁸⁶One of the most earnest appeals for government intervention to bring an end to National Socialist terror in Bavaria was made by a United Socialist representative in the Landtag on June 27, 1923:

"Täglich werden die Hetzhunde der vaterländischen Kampfverbände auf uns losgelassen. An der berechtigten Abwehr werden wir von der Staatsgewalt gehindert, die Angreifer aber lässt man gewähren... Die staatliche Landespolizei, die Staatsgewalt zur Aufrechterhaltung der staatlichen Ordnung, verteilt selbst die Waffen und Gummiknüppel an die Nationalsozialisten zur Niederschlagung der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterschaft. Das, Herr Minister-Präsident, wurde so oft hier gesagt und so unwiderleglich dargetan. Doch statt besser wird es von Tag zu Tag schlimmer." (Ibid., pp. 377-78).

⁸⁷VB., 1. September, 1923.

⁸⁸Hoegner, Die Verratene Republik, p. 137.

⁸⁹Franz-Willing, p. 231. Cf. also Alan Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny (London, 1962), pp. 93 f.

⁹⁰Hoegner, Die Verratene Republik, p. 137.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 135. Also Schulz, pp. 419 f.

⁹²Waite, pp. 239-254. Many former Free Corps men streamed into the so-called "Black Reichswehr", an attempt to raise a secret reserve army in response to the French invasion of the Ruhr. The government in collusion with the Army tried to circumvent the limits set down by the Versailles Treaty by naming this reserve army "Labor Troops" (Ibid., p. 240).

⁹³Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 5, p. 431.

⁹⁴The inflation of German currency was nothing short of catastrophic. In January, 1919, 8 marks were equal to 1 American dollar. Less than 5 years later it was 4,210,500,000,000 to 1. (Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 5, p. 571).

⁹⁵Ibid., vol. 3, Appendix IV, pp. 559-63.

⁹⁶VB., September 26, 1923. The Kampfverbände were para-military organizations in Munich. In July, 1923, the SA joined with three other Kampfverbände to found the Vaterländische Kampfverbände Bayerns. These were Bund Oberland, Reichsflagge, and Unterland. (Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 5, Doc. 1172a).

⁹⁷The most complete set of documents pertaining to the putsch are edited by Ernst Deuerlein, Der Hitler-Putsch: Bayerische Dokumente zum 8/9 November 1923, (Stuttgart, 1962).

⁹⁸Der Hitler-Ludendorff Prozess vor dem Münchener Volksgericht (Munich, 1924), pp. 18-28.

⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 109-124.

¹⁰⁰Hitler appears to have had a strong suicidal tendency which manifested itself on numerous occasions during his career. In November, 1932, he threatened to shoot himself if the party's problems should become uncontrollable; again in 1939, he swore that he would see the war through to final victory or not live to see the end at all. Perhaps he felt guilty about surviving the ignoble conclusion of World War I, for he noted on innumerable occasions that Germany's "best" blood was shed during that war.

¹⁰¹Der Hitler-Prozess, pp. 262-269.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³ Later this mere handful of men, these alte Kämpfer of the early period in the party's history or Kampfzeit were transformed into the heroes of a legendary era by the Führer. Most of Hitler's speeches as Chancellor began with a resumé of the early period in his political career. (Max Domarus, ed., Hitler Reden und Proklamationen 1932-1945, vol. I [Munich, 1962], p. 48).

¹⁰⁴ Norman Cohn's thesis that Nazism and Communism are modern counterparts of medieval millenarian movements seems to be borne out at this point: "The Heavenly City is to appear on this earth; and its joys are to crown not the peregrinations of individual souls but the epic exploits of a 'chosen people'. And such a revolutionary movement is of a peculiar kind, in that its aims and promises are boundless. A social struggle is imagined as uniquely important, different in kind from all other struggles known to history, a cataclysm from which the world is to emerge totally transformed and redeemed. But this...is the very thing that in our time has most clearly characterized the two great totalitarian movements, Communist and Nazi, especially in their early, revolutionary stages". Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millenium 2nd Edition (New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1961), p. 308.

¹⁰⁵ Mein Kampf, pp. 288 f.

¹⁰⁶ Cohn, p. 311.

¹⁰⁷ Mein Kampf, p. 232.

¹⁰⁸ After Hitler came to power he gave perhaps the clearest expression to his concept of the German collapse as a revelation, if not

the beginning of salvation: "Wie oft überdenkt nicht mancher von uns die Frage, was wohl aus Deutschland geworden wäre, wenn uns das Schicksal im Jahre 1914 einen leichten, schnellen Sieg geschenkt haben würde. Was wir damals alle mit heissem Herzen erstrebten, wäre vermutlich, von einer höheren Warte aus gesehen, für unser Volk nur ein Unglück gewesen....Statt durch eine katastrophenhässige Erschütterung vor dem Abgrund zurückgerissen zu werden, wären wir den schleichenden Giften der inneren Volkszersetzung allmählich um so sicherer erlegen!" The occasion was the Party Congress on September 13, 1937. (Domarus, vol. I, pp. 726-32).

Wenn ich meine Tätigkeit wieder aufnehme, werde ich eine neue Politik befolgen müssen. Statt die Macht mit Waffengewalt zu erobern, werden wir zum Verdruss der katholischen und marxistischen Abgeordneten unsere Nasen in den Reichstag stecken. Zwar mag es länger dauern, sie zu überstimmen als sie zu erschliessen, am Ende aber wird uns ihre eigene Verfassung den Erfolg zuschieben. Jeder legale Vorgang ist langsam..., doch werden wir früher oder später die Mehrheit haben - und damit Deutschland.

- Adolf Hitler (Landsberg, 1924)

The Revolution Against the Revolution

During the first four years, later regularly referred to by Hitler as the years of struggle (Kampfzeit), the NSDAP had revealed itself as a new political phenomenon on the right. It has often been said, and not without some justification, that Hitler's ideas were anything but original and that his success was solely a factor of his excessive energy and shameless demagoguery. That is at best a weak explanation; the leaders of other völkisch, nationalistic organizations and parties were often equally vitriolic in their verbal assaults on the republican "system" and capable of the same, abusive anti-Semitism, but without the same, sustained, political success. Hitler's political style and thrust was fundamentally different from that of a right-wing nationalist like Gray Westarp, leader of the DNVP in the immediate postwar period, a Fatherland Party founder like Wolfgang Kapp, or a Völkisch Bloc presidential candidate of the Ludendorff variety. These pan-German, extremely nationalistic types knew they would have to enlist the support of the people but did not know how to go about doing so. They lacked the common touch, Hitler did not. Hitler had that "Fingerspitzengefühl", both for the questions which really rankled the hearts of ordinary people and for the manner in which he presented his National Socialist alternative. He knew that a show of strength, an uncompromising will to power and the determination to act, were far stronger forces in a time when large segments of the German people were wandering about in a political,

economic, and spiritual "no-mans-land", than calm reason and narrowly defined loyalties could possibly be. Hitler, moreover, was a man of the people, an ordinary, unknown soldier: in short, a man with the best possible credentials for post-revolutionary Germany!

The style and practice of National Socialism was deliberately patterned after the radical, revolutionary left which had made such an impact on Germany in late 1918 and early 1919.¹ Hitler studied and modeled his methods after those of his declared enemies, the revolutionary "Marxists", whom he was determined to annihilate root and branch.² In this he was leagues removed from the old-styled nationalists, even though they shared the National Socialist hatred for Marxism. Hitler had no use for the class-conscious society of Imperial Germany with its internal tensions (something the Weimar Republic had not overcome), and sought to erect in its place a completely democratized Volksgemeinschaft. Here too Hitler took a position diametrically opposite to that of the German Nationalists. Like the Communists, the National Socialists promised to restructure society, but Hitler exercised greater caution in giving expression to his revolutionary goals, being careful to concentrate on the weaknesses of the republican system, all the while remaining vague and general about any proposed National Socialist solutions.³ Only the greatest caution and political dexterity allowed him to regroup the Party, storm to the attack once more, and still remain a free agent after his release from Landsberg prison shortly before Christmas 1924.

During Hitler's incarceration the Party had fallen into disarray; some of the leaders had been killed, others, like Göring, had fled the

country, and those who remained fell to quarreling with each other.⁴ Considerations of expediency (the NSDAP was temporarily outlawed) encouraged those who remained active to seek a coalition with the Völkisch organizations during the winter and spring of 1924. Gregor Strasser, Ludendorff, Röhm, and the leader of the Party in Hitler's absence, Alfred Rosenberg, all participated in the spring state and national elections under the Völkisch banner, scoring a minor victory at the polls in doing so.⁵ Their success, however, was largely due to Hitler's popularity, furthered by his resolute stand during the much publicized trial in Munich. Although he had for tactical purposes allowed the NSDAP to crawl under the same blanket with the "parliamentary" nationalists, he was by no means prepared for a permanent partnership. After all, apparent sympathizers and supporters from the conservative and Völkisch camps had more or less abandoned ship when the show-down of November 9, 1923, had taken place. Henceforth only a hard core, absolutely loyal group of dedicated National Socialists, Hitler was convinced, could form the basis of a party determined to attract, convert, and direct the masses. The coalition sought by Ludendorff and Röhm was destined for destruction. While Hitler was still in prison many of his supporters in northern Germany as well as in Bavaria came to blows with the supporters of the Völkisch coalition which Ludendorff and Strasser attempted to consolidate and expand. When Hitler emerged from prison on December 20, 1924, he was determined to prune down the Party by lopping off all those branches which were not prepared for unconditional discipleship.

On February 27, 1925, the NSDAP was officially refounded. This time it was not a small, smoke-filled "Bierstube" that saw the fresh start of the movement, but a mass meeting at which Hitler held forth for the best part of the evening. He invited his old followers to rally behind the Party once more and made it absolutely clear that compromises were out of the picture:

"If anyone comes and wants to impose conditions on me, I shall say to him: "Just wait, my young friend, and see what conditions I impose on you. I am not contending for the favour of the masses. At the end of a year you shall judge, my comrades. If I have acted rightly, well and good. If I have acted wrongly, I shall resign my office into your hands."⁶

Furthermore, Hitler made it very plain that the NSDAP was henceforth determined to go its own way. All cooperation with the Völkisch Bloc ceased and even dual membership was strictly forbidden. An NSDAP member was not allowed to belong to any other political organization whatsoever. Headstrong men like Ernst Röhm and Ludendorff found this new, hard line intolerable and soon broke with Hitler.

The renewed NSDAP had not changed the fundamental goal it sought to achieve, but it did adjust its tactics to a new situations. Not only was Germany politically and economically infinitely more stable in 1925 than it had been in 1923, but the NSDAP was also under much closer surveillance by the authorities than it had been previously. That meant that if Hitler wanted to organize the NSDAP on a nationwide scale he would have to tread carefully. Prussia, for example, prohibited Hitler from speaking in public within its boundaries until September, 1928. It also meant that Hitler would have to be both

revolutionary and radical, since he was convinced that only a determined army of followers prepared to fight for power could possibly achieve the overthrow of the system, and yet appear to be moderate enough to avoid arrest or even deportation. He accordingly masqueraded as the defender of the state and society (from time to time), while steadfastly preparing the overthrow of both.⁷ In order not to frighten potential allies without surrendering the primary goal, the NSDAP developed an extraordinary propaganda program in which a frustrated intellectual, Dr. Paul Josef Goebbels, soon took a keen interest.

Hitler remained as determined after the Putsch as he had been before to oppose the Communists with force and stronger, revolutionary fanaticism. He was more convinced than ever than any party that wished to "conquer" Germany would be compelled to employ "Marxist" methods, i.e., take over the streets by force if necessary. At a meeting of the Hamburg Nationalklub in 1926, Hitler erased whatever doubts might have cropped up concerning his pledge to legality - it remained a facade:

"Der Soldat wurde in der Überzeugung gross: Politik gibt es für dich nicht! Und der Politiker wurde in der Überzeugung grossgezogen: Für dich gibt es nur die geistigen Waffen, keine brutale Gewalt. Die beiden waren zu sehr auseinandergerissen, als dass sie sich noch hätten ergänzen können. Demgegenüber war der Marxismus eingestellt auf die innigste Vermählung dieser beiden Dinge: politische Kraft oder Macht, politisch aufgezogen, politisch durchgesetzt. Der einzelne Mann der Sozialdemokratie, der jederzeit erzogen war, auf die Strasse zu gehen, war vollgefüllt von dem politischen Glaubensbekenntnis seiner Weltanschauung als auch erfüllt von der Überzeugung des Rechts, jedem den Schädel einzuschlagen, der zu opponieren wagte. In ihm verbündete sich Geist und brutale Gewalt in Harmonie.⁸

The heavy emphasis on the Jewish world conspiracy, however, was toned down somewhat in favour of stronger attacks on the bourgeois parties. Hitler recognized that to fight the parliamentary system he would again have to adopt the methods of the opposition: his men would enter the Reichstag. He, nevertheless, remained just as convinced as ever that the parliamentary system and its bourgeois party supporters deserved to be destroyed since they were a product of the defeat and utterly helpless in the face of Germany's real problems.⁹ The NSDAP attacks on the parties in the Reichstag and Hitler's own decision to field candidates for Reichstag elections were sure signs that he considered the solidifying process of the Weimar Republic the greatest threat to his own success. It was a declaration of war on the parliamentary system. "Was also wollen wir im Reichstag?" Goebbels rhetorically asked in 1928, "Wir gehen in den Reichstag hinein, um uns im Waffenarsenal der Demokratie mit deren eigenen Waffen zu versorgen. Wir werden Reichstagsabgeordnete, um die Weimarer Gesinnung mit ihrer eigenen Unterstützung lahmzulegen."¹⁰ This new approach of stealing into the arsenal of democracy in no way should be interpreted to mean that the NSDAP had abandoned the rough-neck tactics that first drew the attention of Munich to Adolf Hitler. On the contrary, the new NSDAP Berlin branch under the leadership of Goebbels virtually exhausted itself in fanatical agitation and street aggressiveness; the Berlin SA units were as active and brutal as ever those "alte Kämpfer" of Munich had been.¹¹

Although the political and economic situation continued to improve in Germany during the period 1925-1928, Hitler slowly but

steadily built up the NSDAP, a party now absolutely loyal to him alone. Memberships rose from 17,000 in 1926, to 60,000 in 1928.¹² Significantly, most of these new members were young and from all segments of society. In Hamburg, for example, 64% of the District Party founding members were under thirty years of age.¹³ Hitler needed young, energetic men to expand the ranks of the SA and SS (Schutzstaffel) and he waged his recruiting campaigns with that in mind. Moreover, relatively young men were elevated into positions of considerable authority within the party. Many of the District Party leaders were under 30 when they were first put in charge of their respective areas: at 26, Baldur von Schirach became youth leader of the NSDAP; Hans Frank was made Reichsleiter at 29; Heinrich Himmler was leader of the SS at the age of 28.¹⁴ Young people, Hitler quite correctly divined, could bring to his cause the kind of unconditional, "pure" faith and boundless energy which, in the long run, could not be equalled by the bourgeois parties.¹⁵ These young men, many of whom had been in the war and the Free Corps, wanted plenty of action in the name of a cause, but did not give a damn for the goals of the German Nationals. They scorned tradition and glorified "acts of the heart".¹⁶ The NSDAP had room for the disillusioned, the adventurers, and opportunists who were quite plentiful in Weimar Germany.

The other side of this party dedicated to violence was the side that knew how to shake hands with reactionary nationalists and wealthy business tycoons. Any real support from established sources, however,

came only after 1929, when Hitler managed to join with the German Nationalists in staging a national plebiscite (Volksbegehren) against the Young Plan.¹⁷ Although the German Nationals and their National Socialist allies lost their bid to have the Young Plan rejected Hitler managed to score an indirect victory. With the help of Hugenberg's newspapers and big business connections he was able to stage a campaign on a scale much greater than would otherwise have been possible. Hitler unleashed a vigorous campaign against the whole republican system, which, he maintained, was designed to throttle and enslave the German people. Nothing could have been more advantageous for the Party than to prophecy economic and political doom in 1929. The Hugenberg - Hitler "Law against the Enslavement of the German People" was barely defeated when the great depression broke in over the heads of the peoples of Europe and North America.

It is self-evident that the growing economic crisis and rampant unemployment was related to the meteoric rise of the NSDAP. The question that remains, however, is why did not that crisis benefit some other party as much as it helped the National Socialists? From even a cursory study of the election results it becomes apparent that the two most bitter enemies of the whole political and social order - the KPD and the NSDAP - made by far the most dramatic gains as the depression deepened. The Center Party, the Social Democrats and the Liberals, for all their efforts, were gradually forced to yield ground, while the DNVP support rapidly declined. It was clear that a far-reaching alternative to the status quo, born of

deep-seated discontent, was sought by the majority of Germans in the early 1930s.¹⁸

The Communists, although rapidly gaining votes, could not possibly provide that alternative since they were still too closely identified with the Soviet Union. Moreover, the bitter conflict between the Social Democrats and their brothers to the left made a united workers front impossible. The events which surrounded the birth of the Weimar Republic had not been forgotten.¹⁹ Consequently, the KPD remained stubbornly dogmatic, refusing to take sufficient notice of the National Socialist peril until it was too late. Hitler, however, showed flexibility and in a series of diplomatic moves managed to enlist the support of a variety of sympathetic groups. Of these by far the most significant was the NSDAP-DNVP "Annäherung", culminating in the so-called "Harzburger Front" of nationalist Germany.²⁰

It is not my intention to dwell on the various factors and forces that led to the dissolution of the Weimar Republic and the establishment of Hitler's regime. There was the shortsightedness of the Social Democrats, the weakness of Hindenburg, the political blunders committed by the victors of World War I, the world economic crisis, the rigidity of the Communists, and other possible causes of the collapse of the Weimar system, all of which have been analyzed and carefully weighed by eminent historians like Bracher, Eyck, Morsey, Matthias and others. Indeed, perhaps the point of departure should no longer read "how was it possible for Hitler 'seize' power"? but instead, "how was it that Hitler did not capture more than 37%

of the popular vote in 1932 or that he did not "seize" power before 1933"?

Within the larger question of Hitler and the German defeat of 1918 the National Socialist "seizure of 'power'" and subsequent revolution falls quite legitimately under the headline of "the revolution against the revolution". That is to say that Hitler consciously styled his opposition to and overpowering of the Weimar "system" as both a restoration and a revolution. He, like no other political leader of that period, managed to tag the Weimar Republic as the product of defeat, a regime forced on Germany by foreign powers, and thus alien and illegitimate. By implication National Socialist Germany would restore the real Germany and yet not the old Germany. The German Nationals represented the class-conscious, patriarchal, reactionary forces which Hitler sought to enlist but whose goals he never shared. He walked the tight-rope between a revolution and restoration image with great balance. What, after all, combines both so well as the paradoxical "Schlüsselbegriff" of the legale Revolution,²¹ of which the ritual incarnation was the ceremony in the Potsdam Garrison Church on March 21, 1933.

Hitler, although aware that a profound longing for an alternative to the grey, helpless, parliamentary system in the early 1930s was widespread, also knew from past experience (notably 1918 and 1923) that the German people had learned to mistrust open revolution and that even the reactionary Reichswehr would not allow sheer force to determine the form of government, even if that force were on the far right of the political spectrum.²² Moreover, the Weimar constitution

was such that it allowed opponents of democracy to enter its "arsenal" and destroy it from the inside, a characteristic of any genuinely democratic constitution. Finally, the very articles of the constitution, notably "article 48", designed to defend the Republic against its enemies were turned against it by Hitler and his allies. At the same time, no party made greater use of the democratic institutions than did the NSDAP. It was a principle that Hitler had learned during the war - defeat the enemy by using the weapons of the opponent against him.²³ This conscious exploitation of the state became something of an obsession with the National Socialist Führer and at one point he went so far as to refer to his imprisonment in comfortable Landsberg as "Meine Hochschule auf Staatskosten".²⁴

If the National Socialists had merely verbalized their contempt for the Weimar system they would have been, as indeed the German Nationalists considered them to be, junior partners of Hugenberg. But Hitler, even before the formal meeting in Bad Harzburg, had already relegated Hugenberg to the role of an apprentice. The style of the National Socialist opposition to parliamentary democracy was far more striking than that of the DNVP. Just after the September, 1930, elections, Hitler's representatives marched into the Reichstag in full uniform, without their leader.²⁵ The NSDAP from that time onward outclassed their German Nationalist allies both at the game of democracy and in the art of destroying democracy. Only after it was too late, after the elections in 1932, when the National Socialists had become infinitely stronger than the German Nationalists, did the latter realize that they and not Hitler had been used as a step ladder to defeat

the other parties including their own.²⁶

Hitler devised the most cunning tactics in his two-pronged offensive to bring down the Weimar Republic. On the one hand he castigated the other parties for their inability to deal with the chaotic economic and political situation in Germany, and on the other, he made damn sure that there would be no end to the turbulence in the Reichstag and in the streets. Bloody street fights between the SA and anyone who chose to resist them were daily occurrences in dying years of the Republic. This deliberate polarization of the nation brought about a situation quite analogous to the revolutionary era of 1918-1919. Frightened by the growing strength of the Communists, large segments of the population turned to the most radical and determined enemy of "Marxism", Hitler's endless columns of uniformed, marching SA men were a visual guarantee that he stood for a return to "Ruhe und Ordnung". On the diplomatic front that assurance was best symbolized in his address before the industrial lords of the Ruhr and Rhine in January 1932. As the champion of anti-Bolshevism he painted before the noses of these captains of industry the threat which that alien doctrine represented:

Ein Teil sagt: 'Voraussetzung zur Writschaft ist das Privateigentum', der andere Teil behauptet: Privateigentum ist Diebstahl. Sie können mir vorhalten, dass diese Anschauungen reine Theorie bedeuten - nein, diese Theorie ist notwendigerweise die Basis für eine Praxis. War dies Auffassung etwa nur eine Theorie, als aus ihr heraus im November 1918 die Revolution ausbrach und Deutschland zerschlug?²⁷

In this speech no wild anti-Semitic outbursts of any kind were to be heard, only the promise that an orderly, nationalistic regime,

putting an end to the destructive party system, would be erected. Once and for all, the causes and effects of the German defeat and revolution with all its corrupt manifestations would be eliminated. Hitler, now emphasizing one aspect of his "program" now another, was able to pacify and enlist the support of groups and individuals politically and socially poles apart. The NSDAP in those critical years had truly become, according to Karl Dietrich Bracher, "eine Sammelpartei".²⁸

Hitler's consummate skill in appearing to be all things to all men, moderate and revolutionary as the situations demanded, nevertheless, did not cloud the NSDAP drive for a fundamental change in the nation's political structures. It did, however, camouflage the nature and extent of his nationale Aufhebung. Hitler carefully avoided any specific statements regarding proposed NSDAP solutions to particular political or economic problems. National Socialists instead remained content to hurl sweeping, broadside attacks which sought to link all the problems which Germany had faced since the defeat and place them at the feet of the other parties.²⁹ In that respect Hitler was consistently "überparteilich".

The NSDAP was not structured like other parties but like an army commanded by a single general. That had implications for those who cast their vote for the Hitler movement about which he was amazingly frank:

...Wenn wir um den deutschen Menschen ringen, dann tun wir es letzten Endes nicht, weil wir ihn als Wähler brauchen, sondern weil wir ihn umerziehen und zu der grossen schicksalhaften Aufgabe bewegen wollen, als Volk sich zu einigen, und damit die Nation zu befreien.³⁰

Hitler's tactical manoeuvres prior to the seizure of power must therefore not be interpreted to mean that he was nothing more than a clever opportunist, for, although he modified his image from time to time, the basic goals stayed the same.³¹ Behind the restless bobbing and weaving was an unwavering quest for power. Every now and then that single-minded will to rule surfaced, even during those uncertain months in 1932 when the National Socialists tried to cultivate a responsible image. In August, for example, Hitler refused Hindenburg's offer concerning NSDAP participation in a von Papen government:

Sie [Hindenburg] wissen, dass ich jederzeit bereit bin, wenn nötig, mein Leben für die Bewegung einzusetzen. Sie wissen, dass Hunderttausende unserer Kameraden das gleich tun und Tausende dabei schwere Opfer bringen. Das alles wäre sinnlos, wenn nun plötzlich die Bewegung für ein anderes Programm als ihr eigenes verliehen werden könnte....³²

What the profile of that program looked like was abundantly clear to the more astute and even not so astute observer one year later.

Hitler's unalterable goal was to lay the basis for a new Germany, a Germany that was structured after his own party. Such a Volks-gemeinschaft, absolutely obedient and fanatically faithful to its National Socialist leaders, would allow a reborn nation to throw off the shackles, internal and foreign, that prevented it from fulfilling its historical mission. That mission, as has been noted earlier, included the annihilation of "Marxism" and democracy internally and the subsequent restoration of a strong, independent Germany internationally. If the correct measures - psychological and biological - were taken, reasoned Hitler, Germany would inevitably once again become a world power.

On January 30, 1933, when Hitler was named Chancellor by the aged hero of World War I, those fundamental goals were temporarily allowed to recede into the background. The consolidation of power took place in stages.

Hitler's "carrot and stick" approach to the seizure of absolute power started with a simple, patriotic plea to all Germans:

...In diesen Stunden der Übermächtig hereinbrechenden Sorgen um das Dasein und die Zukunft der deutschen Nation rief uns Männer nationaler Parteien und Verbände der greise Führer des Weltkrieges auf, noch einmal wie einst an den Fronten, nunmehr in der Heimat in Einigkeit und Treue für des Reiches Rettung unter ihm zu kämpfen....³³

It was a pledge to restoration; fourteen years had passed since Germany, blinded by promises, assaulted by Marxism, and left to wither and die, had known honour and freedom. Now the shield of German honour, as Goebbels jubilantly noted in his diary, had been washed clean again.³⁴

Hitler, for all his compelling rhetoric of reconciliation and restoration, had not the slightest intention of restoring Germany to its pre-1918 form. He did, however, have every intention of obliterating the revolution and its successor, the Weimar Republic. Four days after he was named Chancellor Hitler met with the leaders of the Reichswehr, on which occasion he informed them of the essential aims of his government.³⁵ Germany, he told them, was determined to regain political power which meant that it would have to introduce compulsory military service. That in turn presupposed the elimination of pacifism, Marxism and related poisons, from society altogether, in short, a revolution against the roots

of the 1918 Revolution:

Wer sich nicht bekehren lässt, muss gebeugt werden. ·
Ausrottung des Marxismus mit Stumpf und Stiel. Ein-
stellung der Jugend und des ganzen Volkes auf den
Gedanken, dass nur der Kampf uns retten kann und
diesem Gedanken gegenüber alles zurückzutreten hat.
Ertüchtigung der Jugend und Stärkung des Wehrwillens
mit allen Mitteln. Todesstrafe für Landes- und Volks-
verrat. Straffste autoritäre Staatsführung. Be-
seitigung des Krebseschadens der Demokratie.³⁶

Obviously the seizure of power itself was not to be the final goal but the beginning of a political and social upheaval geared to the creation of a new people. Consistent with the strategy employed by Hitler since the 1923 putsch, the National Socialists carried the dual revolutionary-restorationist image into the post-seizure of power days. Wholesale political arrests and the elimination of uncooperative men in positions of power were common occurrences in the early months of 1933. Independent institutions were likewise the victims of forceful change, euphemistically labelled Gleichschaltung, a policy whereby all the major organizations and institutions in the nation were compelled to "harmonize" with the will of the National Socialist Party.

The various species of force, from murder to ordinary political blackmail, were balanced with legality, a show of solidarity with the German Nationalists, and even an election, however one-sided the means of political propaganda. This combination of brutal force and protestations of nationalism and moderation kept Hitler's allies quiet and his opponents divided and hesitant. The process of changing Germany into a one-party nation was thus carried out rapidly and relatively smoothly.³⁷ By July, 1933, all the other

political parties in Germany had been dissolved and destroyed by the NSDAP. Indeed, during those first five months enormous strides had already been taken toward the establishment of a totalitarian regime with control having been established over schools and other institutions of learning, the media, the police, churches, the nation's labour force, and so forth. Germany was soon to become the regimented, absolutely obedient nation Hitler needed to carry out his larger designs in the realm of foreign policy; in short, it was to be magnified replica of the National Socialist Party.³⁸

Perhaps the most characteristic and foreboding omen to caste its shadow across this "revolution against the revolution" was not so much the eruption, or more accurately, the continuation of violence, but the legalization of force against proscribed enemies in perpetuity. A state of near civil war during the Kampfzeit was not ended with Hitler's rise to power, merely changed into a declaration of war on those who could no longer hope for justice from the state, since the state and the NSDAP were one.³⁹ Ernst Nolte has rather convincingly defined the seizure of power as the defeat of one half of the people over the other half, followed by an internal and foreign policy of "war in peacetime."³⁹

Hitler, following the military defeat of Germany in 1918, had carried the war into the political arena; once that war was won he began to strike out beyond Germany's boundaries. But in the same way in which he had command over more than one image and used

them as advantage dictated during his rise to power, so was he capable of masquerading as a seeker of peace internationally. He consciously employed similar tactics against both foreign and internal foes, which for some time yielded strikingly parallel results. What else was "appeasement" if not the hope, at least on the part of Britain, that Hitler could be "tamed" or perhaps even used to hold back Bolshevist Russia?⁴⁰ Goebbels and Hitler were only too ready to see the parallel. Much later (5.4.1940) the Nationalist Socialist Propaganda Minister in a secret declaration before representatives of the German press explained their strategy:

...Bis jetzt ist es uns gelungen, den Gegner über die eigentlichen Ziele Deutschlands im unklaren zu lassen, genauso wie unsere innerpolitischen Gegner bis 1932 gar nicht gemerkt haben, wohin wir steuerten, dass der Schwur auf die Legalität nur ein Kunstgriff war. Wir wollten legal an die Macht kommen, aber wir wollten sie doch nicht legal gebrauchen.⁴¹

Hitler himself tightened the comparison even more: "our present struggle," he told his dinner companions on November 2, 1941, "is merely a continuation, on the international level, of the struggle we waged on the national level."⁴² In the realm of European politics as in the internal struggle for power, Hitler's opponents seemed to hear only what they wanted to hear, and see what they wanted to see.

If the creation of a strong, militant, National Socialist Germany was the pre-requisite for a successful Hitlerian foreign policy, as it surely was, then it is only logical that during the period of internal "rebirth" Hitler would pursue a mild and recon-

ciliatory foreign policy. He did just that. For an appreciable period of time all talk about German rearmament, tearing up of the Versailles Treaty, and so forth, ceased. Indeed, during the time that Hitler was carrying out the internal revolution nothing but pleas for peace and assurances of National Socialist desires for international friendship and co-operation could be heard from him. Hitler needed to pacify the world since certain powers, particularly England and France, were quite alarmed by events in Germany, and, needless to say, concerned about the possible direction of a National Socialist foreign policy.⁴³ Germany, Hitler reassured them repeatedly in 1933, had only peaceful intentions in mind. To be sure Germany sought equality (Gleichberechtigung), which naturally called for a halt to the distinction between the victors and vanquished of World War I. Thus he called for the abrogation of discriminatory clauses in the Versailles Treaty and subsequent agreements but always only within the framework of peaceful negotiation.⁴⁴ In that regard Hitler appeared to follow in the footsteps of Stresemann, although he gave his predecessors no credit for having laboriously prepared the way for a complete German reintegration into the world community. As for war, the German Führer explicitly stated in October 1933, the nations of Europe had learned in World War I how great the sacrifices were in comparison to the possible gains.⁴⁵ Less than a week later, Germany withdrew from the League of Nations but that move was still carried out very much under the slogan of "peace and equality".⁴⁶ Yet behind this facade of desiring nothing more than the restitution of

Germany and a continuation of the peaceful revision of the Versailles Treaty were the real intentions of Hitler, which he secretly outlined before a select group of military leaders in the home of Army Chief of Staff, General von Hammerstein, as early as February 3, 1933:

Nach aussen. Kampf gegen Versailles. Gleichberechtigung in Genf; aber zwecklos, wenn Volk nicht auf Wehrwillen eingestellt....Aufbau der Wehrmacht wichtigste Voraussetzung für Erreichung des Ziels: Wiedererringung der pol[itischen] Macht. Allg[emeine] Wehrpflicht muss wieder kommen...Wie soll pol[itische] Macht, wenn sie gewonnen ist, gebraucht werden? Jetzt noch nicht zu sagen. Vielleicht Erkämpfung neuer Export-Mögl[ichkeiten], vielleicht - und wohl besser - Eroberung neuen Lebensraums im Osten u. dessen rücksichtslose Germanisierung. Wehrmacht wichtigste u. sozialistische Einrichtung d[es] Staates. Sie soll unpol[itisch] u. überparteilich bleiben. Der Kampf im Innern nicht ihre Sache, sondern der Nazi-Organisationen. - Gefährlichste Zeit ist die des Aufbaus der Wehrmacht. Da wird sich zeigen, ob Fr[ankreich] Staatsmänner hat; wenn ja, wird es uns Zeit nicht lassen, sondern über uns herfallen (vermutlich mit Ost-Trabanten).⁴⁷

No foreign power, however, ever seriously threatened to interrupt Hitler's internal programs of economic revitalization and massive rearmament. Needless to say the systematic destruction of every vestige of Communism inside Germany did not encourage French or British intervention.⁴⁸ Step by step the protestations against the "injustices" of the Versailles Treaty were matched by the injustices perpetrated against a helpless and captive minority inside Germany. While Hitler pleaded the cause of German-speaking people outside the Reich he was legally excommunicating the Jewish community at home.

That campaign was begun immediately after the "nationalist"

phase of the revolution had, so to speak, been brought to a ceremonious conclusion in the Potsdam Garrison Church. On April 1, 1933, a boycott of all Jewish shops and business, proclaimed by Julius Streicher and enforced by squadrons of SA men, came into effect. Streicher introduced this extraordinary measure as retaliation for the Jewish conspiracy during World War I: "Als der Krieg zu Ende war, triumphierte der Jude im Auslande, weil es ihm mittels seines Goldes gelungen war, Deutschland durch Deutsche zu besiegen, und das Deutschland der siegreichen Schlachten zum Verlierer des Weltkrieges zu machen".⁴⁹ An entry in Goebbel's diary sheds far more light on the real meaning of that boycott: we shall only be able to deal with the foreign campaign of lies, he wrote, "wenn es ihren Rassegenossen in Deutschland an den Kragen geht..."⁵⁰ According to Streicher this action was a form of delayed revenge against the "wirepullers" of the "November crime"; Goebbel's remark was, on the other hand, prophetic. If a boycott against German Jews could be sanctioned as a defense reaction against Jews in London or New York what would deter National Socialist Germany from "defending" itself more energetically against "Jewish-led" Moscow or London in the future? In a profound sense Hitler's loudly trumpeted plea for national and international equality, i.e., a revision of the Versailles Treaty, was no longer credible; his concept of the "world enemy" dissolved the boundaries between past and present, internal policy and foreign policy.

The culmination of the National Socialist revolution in Germany was, according to Hitler himself, the promulgation of the Nürnberg

Laws, in particular, "Das Gesetz zum Schutz des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre" of September, 1935.⁵¹ Jews, even the veterans of World War I, were now legally denied the most elemental rights of citizenship and citizenship itself, not for anything they had done but for having been born.⁵² Hitler replaced the concept of citizenship with that of race. National boundaries meant no more to the opponent of "international Jewry" and its ideological offspring, Communism, than they did to orthodox Marxism. Thus, once the necessary steps of psychological and military rearmament, crowned by the laws for the protection of German "blood" and honour, were more or less completed, Hitler wasted no time in storming to the offensive. The first indications of this will to oppose Communism on an international scale followed hard on the heels of the Nuremberg Laws: in 1936, Germany intervened in the Spanish civil war on the side of the reactionary Right, led by General Franco. In the same year Germany signed an Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan, to which Italy added its signature in 1937, thereby establishing an international front against Communism. It meant that in Germany the revolution against the revolution was finished.

There remains, however, one episode which uniquely bridges the shift from a preoccupation with the consolidation of absolute power internally to the assertion of German power in Europe generally - the so-called Röhm revolt. Aside from the fact that the summary execution of many SA leaders and other undesirable elements without trial was in itself unparalleled in the annals of civil justice, it also foreshadowed both the rapid rise of the SS and the Reichswehr.

That is to say, the closing shots of the internal revolution could equally well be heard as the opening shots of a conflict reaching out beyond the borders of Germany. Hitler's own justification of the killings is itself the clearest indication that Germany already considered itself at war:

Meuternde Divisionen hat man zu allen Zeiten durch Dezimierung wieder zur Ordnung gerufen. Nur ein Staat hat von seinen Kriegsartikeln keinen Gebrauch gemacht, und dieser Staat ist dafür auch zusammengebrochen: Deutschland. Ich wollte nicht das junge Reich dem Schicksal des alten ausliefern.⁵³

His feverish efforts to avoid the "mistakes" of Imperial Germany included, above all, being prepared to strike down internal and foreign enemies at a moment's notice. On June 30, 1934, the Führer was determined to sweep all obstacles to a speedy rearmament out of the way. Röhm's dream of a "second revolution" could only delay rearmament by creating unnecessary rivalry between Reichswehr and SA.⁵⁴ The SA, furthermore, had outlived its usefulness. Hitler now wanted an a-political fighting force (Reichswehr) for the eventual acquisition of Lebensraum,⁵⁵ and an élite corps of absolutely obedient men (SS) trained to carry out his political-racial policies. The SS, under Heinrich Himmler, in carrying out the decimation action on June 30, 1934, proved to be just such an instrument. It now became an independent organization within the NSDAP.⁵⁶ Henceforth the SS flourished as Hitler's ideological weapon responsible only to him.⁵⁷

The Army showed itself remarkably amenable to the National Socialist revolution:⁵⁸ a month after the beheading of the SA,

the officers and men of the German Army were called on to swear personal allegiance to Adolf Hitler, because on the same day that Hindenburg died (August 2, 1934), the Chancellor also became the Head of State and as such Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

At the Nuremberg Party Congress in September, Hitler announced that Germany would not experience another revolution for the next thousand years;⁵⁹ less than one year later Germany introduced compulsory military service,⁶⁰ thereby preparing the way for making the National Socialist revolution against the revolution the harbinger and model for a "new order" in Europe.

The Revolution Against the Revolution

¹Hitler's Secret Conversations, p. 392.

²Ernst Nolte's first definition of fascism implies that without Marxism there is no fascism: "Fascism is anti-Marxism which seeks to destroy the enemy by the evolvment of a radically opposed and yet related ideology and by the use of almost identical and yet typically modified methods, always, however, within the unyielding framework of national self-assertion and autonomy". (Three Faces of Fascism, pp. 20-21).

³Jochmann, p. 27.

⁴Bullock, pp. 122 f.

⁵In the Bavarian Landtag elections of April 6, 1924, just five days after sentence was passed in the Hitler trial, the Völkisch Bloc won 23 out of a possible 129 seats. In Munich it led all the other parties. In the national elections of May 4, 1924, the Völkisch coalition elected 32 members, of which 10 were National Socialists.

⁶Konrad Heiden, Hitler, a Biography (London, 1936), p. 198.

⁷Jochmann, p. 30.

⁸Ibid., p. 31.

⁹"Eines Reichtages", Hitler stated in 1923, "der 4 1/2 Jahre lang versagt hat, der zwanzig Jahre zuvor schon mitgeholfen an der Zerstörung des Bismarckschen Reiches... Das Reich ist ja nicht mehr das deutsche Reich des deutschen Gefühls, sondern das Reich der Parteien! Diese aber kennen bloss ihre abgedroschenen Parteidogmen,

ihre Parteigrundsätze, nicht aber deutsches Volksgefühl". (Adolf Hitler's Reden, ed. Ernst Boepple, (Munich, 1933), pp. 74 f).

¹⁰Josef Goebbels, Der Angriff: Aufsätze aus der Kampfzeit (Munich, 1935), p. 70.

¹¹Documentation by Martin Broszat, "Die Anfänge der Berliner NSDAP 1926/27" Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte, VIII, (1960), pp. 85-118.

¹²Joachim Fest, Das Gesicht des Dritten Reiches: Profile einer totalitären Herrschaft (Munich, 1963), p. 55.

¹³Jochmann, p. 34.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Albert Krebs, Tendenzen und Gestalten der NSDAP: Erinnerungen an die Frühzeit der Partei (Stuttgart, 1959), p. 42 f.

¹⁶Kurt Sontheimer, Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik: Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933 (Munich, 1962), p. 67 f.

¹⁷Owen D. Young was an American banker who chaired a committee of experts appointed to complete the negotiations for a final settlement of the reparations questions. The Dawes Plan did not fix the final amount to be paid by Germany and the number of instalments in which it was to be paid. President Hindenburg finally signed the legislation which contained the Young Plan on March 13, 1930. (Bullock, pp. 146-47).

¹⁸National election results (1919-1933) are recorded in Ursachen und Folgen Vol. 3, Appendix I.

¹⁹Ernst Nolte, Der Faschismus von Mussolini zu Hitler-Texte, Bilder und Dokumente (Munich, 1968), pp. 148-149.

²⁰Hitler, Hugenberg, Seldte and Dösterberg, the leaders of the Stahlhelm, General von Seeckt, Dr. Schacht, and a number of industrial figures, all gathered in a small town in the Harz Mountains to pass a solemn resolution uniting nationalists in Germany in October, 1931.

²¹Karl Dietrich Bracher, "Nationalsozialistische Macht-ergreifung" in Der Weg in die Diktatur 1918-1933 (Munich, 1963), pp. 153-74.

²²Ibid., pp. 156-57.

²³A classic example of this attitude was Goebbels's reflections on the abuse of parliamentary democracy by the NSDAP: "Die Dummheit der Demokratie. Das wird immer einer der besten Witze der Demokratie bleiben, dass sie ihren Todfeinden die Mittel selber stellt, durch die sie vernichtet wurde. Die verfolgten Führer der NSDAP traten als Abgeordnete in den Genuss der Immunität, der Diäten und der Freifahrkarte. Dadurch waren sie vor dem polizeilichen Zugriff gesichert, durften sich mehr zu sagen erlauben als gewöhnliche Staatsbürger und liessen sich die Kosten ihrer Tätigkeit vom Feinde bezahlen. Aus der demokratischen Dummheit liess sich vortrefflich Kapital schlagen. Auch die Anhängerschaft der NSDAP begriff das sofort und hatte ihre helle Freude daran". (Josef Goebbels, Der Angriff, p. 61).

²⁴Hans Frank, Im Angesicht des Galgens (Munich, 1953), p. 46.

²⁵Hitler was not legally entitled to take a seat in the Reichstag since he was, in 1930, not yet a citizen of Germany. He became a German citizen in 1932 in order to make himself eligible to stand as a candidate for the presidency.

²⁶Thimme, p. 152.

²⁷Domarus, vol. I, pp. 68 f.

²⁸Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik, p. 106.

²⁹A typical attack on the system by the NSDAP was undertaken by Feder in the Reichstag on July 18, 1930: "Von der gesamten Regierung und von den Regierungsparteien hat niemand gewagt, auf den wirklichen Grund alles Elendes hinzuweisen: auf die Dawes-Gesetze und auf den Young Plan. In gerader Linie geht der Weg von dem marxistischen Dolchstoß im Jahre 1918 über den Waffenstillstand zum Schandfrieden von Versailles, dann über die Konferenzen von Spa, Brüssel, Ostende, Genua, Genf nach London zu dem Abschluss des Dawes-Plans (Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 8, p. 53).

³⁰Domarus, vol. I, pp. 175-6.

³¹Jochmann, p. 51.

³²Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 8, p. 620.

³³Domarus, vol. I, pp. 191-194.

³⁴Goebbels, Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei (Munich, 1937), p. 286.

³⁵Documentation by Thilo Vogelsang "Neue Dokumente zur Geschichte der Reichswehr, 1930 bis 1933", Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 2 (1954), pp. 434 f.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷The most comprehensive account of the National Socialist seizure of power is still Karl Dietrich Bracher, Wolfgang Sauer, Gerhard Schulz, Die Nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung (Cologne, 1960).

³⁸"...Weltanschauungen aber sehen in der Erreichung der politischen Macht nur die Voraussetzung für den Beginn der Erfüllung ihrer eigentlichen Mission... Am 30. Januar 1933 wurde die Nationalsozialistische Partei mit der politischen Führung des Reiches beauftragt. Ende März war die nationalsozialistische Revolution äußerlich abgeschlossen. Abgeschlossen, insoweit es die restlose Übernahme der politischen Macht betrifft. Allein, nur der, dem das Wesen dieses gewaltigen Ringens innerlich unverständlich blieb, kann glauben, dass damit der Kampf der Weltanschauungen seine Beendigung gefunden hat". (Die Reden Hitlers am Reichsparteitag 1933, Munich, 1934), p. 22.

³⁹Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism, pp. 343, 347 f.

⁴⁰Martin Gilbert, The Roots of Appeasement (London, 1966), pp. 162-165.

⁴¹Hans Adolf Jacobsen, Der Zweite Weltkrieg - Grundzüge der Politik und Strategie in Dokumenten (Frankfurt and Hamburg, 1965), pp. 180-181.

⁴²Hitler's Secret Conversations, p. 127.

⁴³Die Nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung, pp. 261 f.

⁴⁴Domarus, vol. I, pp. 212-13.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 308 f.

⁴⁶Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 10, pp. 54-55.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 114. Foreign Minister von Neurath outlined the National Socialist foreign policy even more precisely in a cabinet meeting on April 7, 1933: "Territoriale Grenzrevisionen können erst dann angeschnitten werden, wenn Deutschland militärisch, politisch und finanziell erstarkt ist. Bis dahin müssen wir uns mit wirksamer Propaganda auf der Grundlage der Wilsonschen Punkte begnügen.... Unser Hauptziel bleibt die Umgestaltung der Ostgranze. Es kommt nur eine totale Lösung in Frage". (Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 10, p. 5).

⁴⁸Domarus, vol. I, p. 231.

⁴⁹Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 9, p. 389.

⁵⁰Goebbels, Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei, March 26, 1933, p. 288.

⁵¹Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 11, pp. 163-164.

⁵²Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism, p. 377.

⁵³Domarus, vol. I, p. 410 f.

⁵⁴Hermann Mau, "Die Zweite Revolution - der 30. Juni 1934", Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte, vol. I (1953), pp. 119-137.

⁵⁵Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 10, p. 114.

⁵⁶Völkischer Beobachter, July 26, 1934.

⁵⁷For a comprehensive study on the structure, functions and history of the SS see: Hans Buchheim, Martin Broszat, eds. Anatomie des SS-Staates, Gutachten des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte, 2 vols. (Olten and Freiburg), 1965.

⁵⁸On April 20, 1934, General Blomberg, Minister of Defense sent Hitler birthday congratulations: "Mit Stolz sind wir Soldaten uns

bewusst, dass die Bewegung, die Sie ins Leben riefen und die heute kraftvoll den Staat durchdrungen hat, in ihrem Ursprung auf das soldatische Erlebnis des Krieges zurückgeht. Die Kampfgemeinschaft auf Leben und Tod, die draussen in den Schützengräben der Front einst alle verband, war zugleich die Geburtsstunde der grossen Idee, der Sie im Deutschland der Nachkriegszeit zum Durchbruch und zum Siege verholfen haben und in der sich heute das ganze Volk zu neuer Volksgemeinschaft zusammengefunden hat. Deshalb fühlt sich der Soldat aus innerstem Gefühl heraus eins mit dem neuen Staat". (Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 10, pp. 123-124).

⁵⁹ Norman H. Baynes, ed., The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, 1922-1939, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1942), pp. 328-29.

⁶⁰ Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 10, pp. 315-317.

Ein November 1918 wird sich niemals mehr
in der deutschen Geschichte wiederholen!

- Adolf Hitler,

September 1, 1939

Never another 1918!

When Hitler in September, 1934, proclaimed before the assembled nation on the Reichsparteitagsgelände just outside Nuremburg that Germany would not experience another revolution in the next one thousand years he was not merely the victim of emotional excesses indulging in prophetic claptrap; in an exaggerated fashion he was symbolically characterizing the intention of the movement which he led. The National Socialist Revolution was hardly a palace revolt or even one simply dedicated to changing the existing institutions, but at its deepest level a spiritual and biological revolution, one which would allow "natural laws" to ultimately prevail in the affairs of Europe. In addition to threatening the social and legal foundations of civilized society this struggle against modernity and for a pre-industrial, peasant-soldier culture presented National Socialism with the peculiar dilemma of how to create an autarkic state, capable of waging war in an industrial age, and still realize the ideal Gemeinschaft. Thus, while the NSDAP on the one hand looked forward to a great new Germany, it also had eyes firmly focused on the past.

It has already been noted that Hitler's blueprint for a new Germany was based squarely on his analysis of what had been wrong with Imperial Germany, particularly during World War I. The fourteen years which stood between 1918 and 1933, were simply Germany's "Babylonian Captivity" period, significant only as the Kampfzeit of the Movement. Otherwise, the Weimar Republic was to be blotted out,

erased from the history of Germany. Hitler sought to take up the struggle where Imperial Germany had abandoned it. His revolution and rule, although forcing the course of events forward with hectic speed, had its sights, paradoxically enough, trained on World War I and its immediate results. Therefore working backward from 1933 forshadowes the direction of events which followed Hitler's seizure of power. To undermine the Weimar Republic, to stage a revolution against the revolution, to rearm and tear up the Versailles Treaty, to eliminate elements supposedly responsible for the defeat from the mainstream of the nation, could only mean that the next step would be a war itself to undo the military defeat of 1918.

Hitler attempted to hide his ultimate goals in the realm of foreign policy in the same way that he had tried to deceive the various parties before the final seizure of power. Once the revolution in Germany was complete Hitler was determined to carry out the same revolution on a European scale.¹

The profile of that policy, however, was recognizable from the earliest days of the Movement. In the NSDAP "Program" of February 24, 1920, the first three demands already outline the direction which Hitler later pursued:

- 1) Wir fordern den Zusammenschluss aller Deutschen auf Grund des Selbstbestimmungsrechtes der Völker zu einem Gross-Deutschland.
- 2) Wir fordern die Gleichberechtigung des deutschen Volkes gegenüber den anderen Nationen, Aufhebung der

Friedensverträge in Versailles und St. Germain.

- 3) Wir fordern Land und Boden (Kolonien) zur Ernährung unseres Volkes und Ansiedelung unseres Bevölkerungsüberschusses.²

To demand self-determination for all German-speaking people, the abrogation of the peace treaties and "living-space" for an expanding population in 1920, could serve equally well as a description of his achievements two decades later. In Mein Kampf and Hitler's Secret Book³ the demands of the Party Program are amplified but not basically altered. The mission of the NSDAP from the time that Adolf Hitler became its leader was directed toward a restoration of the "true" German nation in preparation for the conquest of "living-space".⁴

In the postwar period many Germans, particularly those with conservative, monarchical leanings, were anxious to have the boundaries of the nation extended. Hitler quite openly stated that his demands were not to be confused with those seeking to restore the boundaries of 1914. "The demand for restoration of the frontiers of 1914", he wrote in Mein Kampf, "is a political absurdity of such proportions and consequences as to make it seem a crime".⁵ Ideological and racial categories, not bourgeois "frontier and state" concepts, were to be the National Socialist frame of reference for settling the question of "living-space". Since the greatest enemy of Germany was Jewish-led international Marxism, he reasoned, to struggle for the old borders would be a criminal waste of blood.⁶ It would solve nothing. Nevertheless,

Germany needed a more tolerable land-population-ratio, how could that be achieved?

Two solutions presented themselves; 1) expansion of trade and possible acquisition of overseas colonies; 2) birth control. The latter was simply slow suicide and the former had been unsuccessfully attempted in the prewar period - it led to conflict with Great Britain, a potential ally. But there was a National Socialist alternative and that, according to Hitler, was to "turn our gaze toward the land in the east".⁷ It would solve the racial, ideological and territorial problems of Germany by striking the heart of the Jewish-Bolschevist plague, subduing the Slavs and conquering the necessary Lebensraum. Finally, it would liberate the Russians and their border states, "impossible as it is for the Russian by himself to shake off the yoke of the Jew by his own resources."⁸

Such a program was bound to lead to war, but to a war, Hitler hoped, that could be fought under more favourable conditions than was World War I. Although he was convinced that France would remain Germany's eternal enemy, Italy and England could be considered potential, indeed "natural" allies.⁹ Italy was ruled by a regime inspired by an ideology which Hitler had long admired and often emulated; moreover, it was land like Germany in search of more territory. Great Britain, on the other hand, could become an alliance partner with a Germany no longer intent on pursuing an ambitious, and for Britain, threatening trade and maritime

policy. In addition, both Great Britain and Italy shared a long-standing antipathy for France.¹⁰

Hitler believed himself some considerable distance toward the goal of achieving the kind of alliance with Great Britain, which would permit Germany a free hand in the East and ideally result in a joint Anglo-German campaign against Russia, with the signing of the Naval Agreement in 1935.¹¹ He thought that this arrangement, according to which German strength at sea should never exceed that of 35 if British power were set at 100, would help to put an end to the insane rivalry which had led to both powers opposing each other in World War I.

In a sense it was a remarkable achievement which, when combined with the visits of such notable British statesmen as David Lloyd George, an enthusiastic admirer of Hitler, in part account for the drastic miscalculations made by the Führer during World War II.¹²

The relations with Mussolini, not particularly friendly since the attempted SA Putsch in Austria of July, 1934, were simultaneously warmed up. Hitler deliberately maintained a type of benevolent neutrality during the height of the Abyssinian crisis, when other Western Powers severely chided Italy and even threatened her with economic sanctions. He thereby earned a reciprocal favour in 1936 upon tearing up the Locarno Agreement and marching into the Rhineland.¹³ In 1936, Germany and Japan concluded an Anti-Comintern Pact which Italy signed and the following year, thereby bringing into being that constellation of powers which was to have an immense

impact on the course of international politics for the next 6 years.

In 1936 there were innumerable signs pointing to a change in National Socialist foreign policy of which the march into the formerly demilitarized Rhineland was merely the most obvious. Far more significant was the memorandum of August, 1936, in which Hitler outlined the goals to be achieved by the second Four Year Plan.¹⁴ This document is of special interest since, being of an absolutely secret nature, there was no need to introduce superfluous propaganda. Nevertheless, Hitler's logic remained the same:

Seit dem Ausbruch der französischen Revolution treibt die Welt in immer schärferem Tempo in eine neue Auseinandersetzung, deren extremste Lösung Bolschewismus heisst, deren Inhalt und Ziel aber nur die Beseitigung und Ersetzung der bisland führenden Gesellschaftsschichten der Menschheit durch das international verbreitete Judentum ist... Ein Sieg des Bolschewismus über Deutschland würde nicht zu einem Versailler Vertrag führen, sondern zu einer endgültigen Vernichtung, ja Ausrottung des deutschen Volkes.¹⁵

Within four years, he demanded, the German economy must be "kriegsfähig" and the German Army "einsatzfähig". Hitler's own intentions, now as in the early period of the Party, could be most clearly recognized by the projected image of the "enemy".

The National Socialist will to spearhead the fight against Bolshevism could also be detected in the public pronouncements of the NSDAP élite. In a speech at the annual Party Congress in September, 1936, Goebbels reminded his listeners that whereas bourgeois

Europe had revealed itself completely incapable of resisting Bolshevism National Socialism had shown itself equal to the task: "Adolf Hitler ist als Führer dieses deutschen Kampfes gleicherweise zum besten Europäer geworden."¹⁵ In the same manner in which the NSDAP had once seized power in Germany through constant struggle, so Germany would also rise to become the leading power of Europe through struggle. "Der gleiche Feind", Hitler told the 1937 Party Congress, "der uns zuerst ins Leben rief und uns dann im Laufe dieses Kampfes immer wieder stärkte, steht uns auch heute gegenüber."¹⁷

In 1937, with most of the fundamental groundwork for an aggressive foreign policy already laid, Hitler became much more specific about the plans for the immediate future. In November 1937, according to the so-called Hossbach Memorandum, he reiterated before his ministers of war and foreign affairs his concern about Germany's lack of Lebensraum - Austria and Czechoslovakia were ear-marked for special attention.¹⁸

The two years preceding the outbreak of a general war are crammed full of events, speeches and documents, all of which have been cited and recited many times in conjunction with the immediate origins of World War II. Hitler was pushing for a show-down, perhaps not the kind of general war at the time it broke out, but an armed conflict at any rate, of that there can be no reasonable doubt. Evidence in support of Hitler's determination to solve certain fundamental problems by force is so overwhelming that it appears in retrospect superfluous for him to have declared before members of the German

press in late November 1938, that he had until then been forced to conceal the direction of his policies with speeches about peace.¹⁹

With every success Hitler quickened the pace as if to substantiate the ancient maxim that "those whom the gods seek to destroy they first make drunk with power." But there were more earthly reasons also: he was convinced in 1938/1939 that time was running against Germany, since the giant to the East could and would multiply more rapidly than Germany. Moreover, military and technical superiority might well be an advantage which Germany would enjoy for a brief period only.²⁰ Finally, and probably most importantly, Hitler was in a hurry because he believed that he alone possessed the energy to see his plans through the enormous crises which the realization of them would inevitably involve.²¹ Albert Speer recalls that in those hectic months just prior to the outbreak of World War II Hitler frequently expressed his concern about how little time he himself could still expect to have for the completion of his work.²²

The tempo of events picked up with his own confidence in the historic mission which destiny seemed prepared to let him fulfill. By 1937 his conviction that Providence indeed was leading him became quite pronounced. History, he thereby admitted, would have to be rewritten; perhaps Germany's catastrophic collapse in 1918 was really only the prelude to his own emergence, the night before the dawning of a great new era.

"Wie oft überdenkt nicht mancher von uns die Frage, was wohl aus Deutschland geworden wäre, wenn uns das Schicksal im Jahre 1914 einen leichten, schnellen Sieg geschenkt haben würde.... Statt durch eine katastrophenmässige Erschütterung vor dem Abgrund zurückgerissen zu werden, wären wir den schleichenden Giften der inneren Volkszersetzung allmählich um so sicherer erlegen."²³

That Hitler and National Socialism could never have emerged had not Germany suffered a collapse in 1918 is beyond dispute. Few, however, even of those present at that Party Congress in Nuremberg, had any real reason to consider it a blessing in disguise because in that same speech Hitler left little doubt but that another war was already darkening the horizon. Indeed, he declared that a conflict of historic significance had already begun - not since the collapse of the Greco-Roman world had human culture and civilization itself been so seriously threatened. Finally, he proceeded to both assure his listeners and warn potential enemies, "dass...der nationalsozialistische Staat mit einem anderen Fanatismus für seine Existenz eintreten und kämpfen würde als das bürgerliche Reich von einst, daran soll niemand zweifeln".²⁴ In political terms that meant a declaration of war against Bolshevism and its mother, Democracy. Ultimately, it meant the annihilation of the biological root of both ideologies, "international Jewry".

Hitler's dire warning that National Socialists would fight with a fanaticism different from that of the bourgeois Reich of old was a typical example of that combination of propaganda and unshakeable determination and faith so characteristic of all his

speeches from that time onward. Germany's youth in fact were reared to become fanatical fighters and haters of Bolshevism and democracy, and fervent followers of the Führer.²⁵ Whereas the state had hitherto been considered only one of the educational pillars of society along with the home, church, and school, it now attempted to regulate and regiment the entire Erziehungsprozess of the nation's youth. The primary purpose of the Hitler Youth, beyond shouting paeans of praise to the Führer, was to prepare them for military service.²⁵ The young people were brought up to be absolutely loyal to Hitler, and, since the latter claimed to be Germany personified, dedicated to the state. On them depended the ultimate realization of the true Volksgemeinschaft and therefore they were taught to work and die for National Socialism, if called upon to do so. The NSDAP demanded the whole person and by 1938 had so structured society that a young person simply moved from one party organization into another. At the age of ten young Germans entered the Jungvolk, four years later the "Hitler Youth", followed by voluntary service, the SS or SA, the Army, back to the SA or SS..."und sie werden nicht mehr frei, ihr ganzes Leben".²⁶ National Socialism was to be their religion and Adolf Hitler their god.

The Party knew how to make the indoctrination of young people very attractive to the participants. "Es war grosse politische Klugheit der Hitlerjugend, dass dieser Formenschatz sofort übernommen wurde, Fahr und Fest, Lagerfeuer, Musik, Volkslied, Volks-

tanz, Leibesübung - alles, was einst der "inneren Wahrhaftigkeit" und freien Menschlichkeit zum Gedeih gedacht war, nun unbiegend zum straffen Dienst am Nationalismus", writes a former BDM (Bund Deutscher Mädchen) leader.²⁷ In the Third Reich they were given a place in the grandiose party congresses at Nuremberg. How ecstatic these young worshippers of Hitler were on such occasions is apparent from the following eye-witness account:

Es scheint als ob diese Jugend keine Ruhe mehr geben will, denn der Führer, ihr Führer, ist vor das Mikrophon getreten, um zu ihr zu sprechen. Jedesmal, wenn Adolf Hitler beginnen will, braust es auf, dieses endlose Heil, das sich erst nach Minuten wieder legt. Dann spricht der Führer, und dann, als seine Worte verklungen sind, da liegt über Jugend und Gästen und über den Führer selbst eine Erregung und eine Begeisterung, für die es keine Worte gibt.²⁸

In a very real sense these mass rallies with their emotion-choked addresses were the National Socialist reincarnation of the "August days" 1914, only this time they were carefully planned and elaborately staged. That became strikingly apparent on the day that Germany declared war on Poland for there were no spontaneous outbursts of enthusiasm in Berlin on September 1, 1939, as there had been twenty-five years before.²⁹ Hitler's miscalculation in this regard was surpassed only by his underestimation of "bourgeois" Britain's will to resist German aggression in Europe. Both mistakes, ironically enough, were the end-product of too much success. The Nuremberg rallies and the Munich Agreement were not an accurate reflection of either the German people's love for war or the summit of British statesmanship but rather the outer limits of the former's enthusiasm for war the latter's willingness to avoid it.

Hitler was convinced that the struggle for German hegemony over Europe would follow the natural political laws as demonstrated by the NSDAP internal seizure of power. The decadent, bourgeois British and the bull-headed and primitive Russian Bolsheviks would succumb to the National Socialists in the same way that the German bourgeoisie and the Communists had been defeated in 1932-1933. Even after the Battle of Britain he maintained that "Dieser Kampf um kein Haar anders ausgehen wird, als der Kampf, den ich einst im Innern ausfocht."³⁰ In Munich the British had resembled the German Nationals but by September, 1939, that comparison was more the product of wishful thinking than a description of European political reality.

No one contributed more to the destruction of such a parallel development than Hitler himself, or better, in the final year before the war the conflicting tendencies inherent in National Socialist ideology came clearly to the surface and even the most energetic propaganda failed to hide them. On November 9, 1938, German authorities carried out an organized pogrom against the Jews of Germany in response to the murder of the German diplomat, Ernst von Rath, by a Jewish fanatic in Paris. Those who had so urgently and consistently pleaded the cause of German minorities in other countries now dealt with a minority within its own borders in a fashion in which no German minority had ever been treated. Hitler, who had so passionately inveighed against the injustices of the Versailles Treaty, now exacted from a small group of German Jews an enormous "reparation" as the penalty for the deed of one

man.³¹ How could anyone still believe that he sought only to champion the rights of all German-speaking people? Or how could the concept of Gleichberechtigung, so frequently forwarded by the National Socialists, be harmonized with the push for more living-space? With the destruction of what was left of Czechoslovakia in March, 1939, the contradiction in policy and propaganda was naked for all to see. Finally, the "defender" of European civilization against Bolshevism entered into a ten-year Non-Aggression Pact with the bastion of Bolshevism, Soviet Russia. He revealed himself thereby to be not merely an anti-Communist but very much an imperialist prepared to smash the Versailles Treaty with his sworn enemy as an accomplice. Hitler's failure, to combine his hitherto flaming anti-Communism with the fight for living-space destroyed whatever arguments he advanced in the eyes of the Western Powers. He still sought to have his differences with Poland viewed as part of the Versailles Treaty revision policy, to which Great Britain had always remained particularly open, but those rationalizations now lacked all credibility.³² By the time Hitler had combined his thrust for living-space with the crusade against Communism (June, 1941) it was too late to avoid the two-front constellation of World War I he had always sought to avoid. Instead of leading a united European campaign against Bolshevism he had forced together the most unnatural coalition against Germany.³³

For all his strident self-confidence, Hitler, even before the planned attack on Poland was launched, made a left-handed admission

to the effect that there might indeed be a temporary conflict within the larger framework of his "program":

Alles, was ich unternehme, ist gegen Russland gerichtet; wenn der Westen zu dumm und zu blind ist, um dies zu begreifen, werde ich gezwungen sein, mich mit den Russen zu verständigen, den Westen zu schlagen und dann nach seiner Niederlage mich mit meinen versammelten Kräften gegen die Sowjetunion zu wenden. Ich brauche die Ukraine, damit man uns nicht wieder wie im letzten Krieg aushungern kann.³⁴

He was consequently compelled to improvise. The risks which such deviations from his "plan" entailed were considerable but to delay the inevitable conflict Hitler held to be even more dangerous.

The period just before and after September 1, 1939, would be of no particular interest within the context of this paper were it not for the paradoxical and illuminating National Socialist analysis of World War II. In a sense "never another 1918"³⁵ had been Hitler's leit-motif from the beginning of his political career but in 1939 those words took on new dimensions. On the one hand they were reiterated in one form or another as a warning to potential enemies, a species of scare propaganda; on the other, this slogan was designed to bolster the fighting spirit of Germany for the coming conflict. At the focal point of the address before the German Reichstag on the day of the invasion of Poland it meant all that and more. Hitler spoke of how he had spent all his energy and most of Germany's wealth in equipping the nation, spiritually and materially, in a way in which Imperial Germany had not been prepared in 1914. Certainly

that was intended to boost the morale of the nation and intimidate Great Britain and France. However, it was also a statement of resolve both on behalf of himself individually and as the Führer of the nation. Germany, he maintained, would never again fight the kind of war it had once fought and the leadership would never again weaken and dissolve. It would be a life of death struggle, one in which internal and foreign enemies would be dealt with in a manner quite unlike that of World War I. That Germany might, nevertheless, once again go down to defeat was a thought which haunted Hitler even at the height of his conquests. At its deepest level, therefore, "never another 1918" was a shout of defiance by a man who knew that he was courting a far more devastating defeat in seeking to achieve with arms that which only the wildest annexationists of World War I had dared to dream of.

Thus it was with one eye over the shoulder that Hitler began the war against Poland. Internally it meant that he would enforce the strictest discipline and above all make certain that no revolution would break out. In Mein Kampf he had written concerning the defeat that if in 1914, and later during the war, "twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas...the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain."³⁶ With the beginning of World War II there was a radical change in the evolution of the concentration camps. The number of those incarcerated grew enormously.³⁷

Because war, Hitler maintained, tended to rob a nation of its best blood and preserve the worst elements, extraordinary measures

would have to be taken to ensure that it would not happen again:

"Wenn ich das Gute dezimiere", he explained to his Minister of Justice in 1942, "während ich das Schlechte konserviere, dann kommt das, was 1918 war, dass fünf oder sechshundert Strolche eine ganze Nation vergewaltigen."³⁸ But the systematic decimation, at home and in the conquered territories of the mentally ill, of Jews and gypsies, women and children included, that surely was not carried out to prevent a revolution but to enact one. The turbulence of war provided the smokescreen he needed to destroy the spiritual and moral foundations of Europe's social and judicial structures and to replace those with "natural laws", i.e., racial-biological laws.³⁹

National Socialism had carefully planned for the destruction of all "enemies of the state" and potential revolutionary elements, once the war which was to decide the "being or non-being" of Germany began. The SS was specially trained for and entrusted with this task. In an address before the SS in January, 1937, Heinrich Himmler made the following statement:

Wir werden in einem künftigen Kriege nicht nur die Front der Armee auf dem Lande, die Front der Marine zu Wasser, die Front der Luftwaffe in der Luftglocke über Deutschland haben, wie ich es nennen möchte, sondern wir werden einen vierten Kriegsschauplatz haben: Innerdeutschland! Das ist die Basis die wir gesund erhalten müssen, auf Biegen oder Brechen gesund, weil sonst die drei anderen, die kämpfenden Teile Deutschlands wieder den Dolchstoß bekämen.⁴⁰

Presumably there would have been no need for the SS if Hitler's generals had shared his political and military intentions. Despite

the real or promised power and prestige which the Army enjoyed, Hitler knew that he could not entrust the Army with the task of carrying out and supervising National Socialist occupation policies.⁴¹

Beyond the maintenance of the strictest security internally, especially in the event of war, the SS was assigned to carry out the ideological struggle with whatever enemy Germany found itself in a state of war.⁴² What that meant once the war against Poland and later the Soviet Union raged was finally realized in the mass extermination camps of eastern Europe. The annihilation of the Jews and Slavic intelligentsia was therefore not a perversion of National Socialism but its very core. "Wir hatten das moralische Recht, wir hatten die Pflicht gegenüber unserem Volke", Himmler said in 1943, "dieses Volk, das uns umbringen wollte, umzubringen."⁴³ Extermination of all Jews was held by Hitler and Himmler to be both the prerequisite for victory and an end in itself. That did not change even after defeat became inevitable:

Wir wissen, wie schwer wir uns taten, wenn wir heute noch in jeder Stadt - bei den Bombenangriffen, bei den Lasten und bei den Entbehrungen des Krieges - noch die Juden als Geheimsaboteure, Agitatoren, und Hetzer hätten. Wir würden wahrscheinlich jetzt in das Stadium des Jahres 1916/17 gekommen sein, wenn die Juden noch im deutschen Volkskörper sässen.⁴⁴

Although by far and away the most macabre, these "corrections" of the "errors" made by Imperial Germany in World War I were by no means the only ones he credited himself with during

the course of World War II. The reverse side of his brutal methods to forfend a revolution was his extraordinary caution in placing on the shoulders of the people burdens which might lead to widespread discontent. Speer has written concerning this:

"Es bleibt eine der verblüffenden Erfahrungen dieses Krieges, dass Hitler dem eigenen Volke jene Belastungen ersparen wollte, die Churchill oder Roosevelt ihren Völkern ohne Bedenken auferlegten...Hitler und die Mehrzahl seiner politischen Gefolgsleute gehörten der Generation an, die im November 1918 die Revolution als Soldaten erlebt und nie verwunden hatten. In privaten Gesprächen liess Hitler oft durchblicken, dass man nach der Erfahrung von 1918 nicht vorsichtig genug sein könne."⁴⁵

Hitler's reluctance to mobilize the entire nation economically, moreover, also reflected his political and military strategy. He hoped initially to avoid a long, all-out war in favour of short, swift campaigns against diplomatically isolated opponents. The Fall Weiss War Directive of April 3, 1939, notes that the isolation of Poland will remain a fact even after the outbreak of hostilities "je mehr es gelingt den Krieg mit überraschenden, starken Schlägen zu eröffnen und zu schnellen Erfolgen zu führen."⁴⁶ Short, decisive blows were to characterize Hitler's style of warfare as long as the initiative remained on the German side. This strategy of sudden, lightening fast attacks, whereby motorized units supported by carefully coordinated air power, in addition to serving as an alternative to the costly trench warfare of 1914-18 were also planned to match Germany's economic strength.⁴⁷ The Blitzkrieg strategy, Hitler believed, could obtain the maximum results and simultaneously avoid the costly mistakes of World War I. All National Socialist

propaganda notwithstanding, Germany was not equipped for any and every eventuality. Although the Four Year Plan of 1936 had stipulated that the German economy and army were to be ready for war within four years that goal had only been partially achieved. Germany was not as well armed as Britain and France believed it to be, and yet well enough equipped to carry out short campaigns.⁴⁸ Hitler's Blitzkrieg strategy must therefore be viewed alongside the nation's economic capacity.⁴⁹ Although his military strategy had been based on the presupposition that a "great" war would be avoided until 1943/44, the rapid widening of the war did not appreciably alter economic policies until sometime after the offensive against Russia had been launched.⁵⁰

The decisive factor in granting National Socialist Germany initial success where Imperial Germany had failed, Hitler held to be superior leadership. With the swift succession of stunning victories Hitler's criticism of Germany's leadership in World War I, a constant point of reference, turned to scorn. "I cannot tell you how greatly I suffered, during the Great War", he told his table companions in July 1941, "from the weaknesses of our command. In a military sense we were not at all clever, and in a political sense we were so clumsy that I had a constant longing to intervene...".⁵¹ When France fell in the spring of 1940 in a few short weeks where four years of hard fighting in World War I had not brought that nation to its knees, Hitler's confidence in himself and his forces knew no bounds:

Ich bin vor wenigen Tagen erst durch Belgien und Frankreich gefahren, und ich muss als alter Weltkriegssoldat sagen, es ist wundervoll, wie unsere Wehrmacht heute aussieht, gleichgültig, ob Heer, Marine, Luftwaffe oder Waffen-SS. Sie sind nicht zu vergleichen mit dem, was 1914 oder 1915 war.⁵²

Victory against France proved to be a mixed blessing for it did not, as Hitler fervently hoped it would, bring about a settlement with Great Britain. In 1939 he had planned to prevent British intervention by signing the Non-Aggression Pact with Russia.⁵³ When that failed Hitler believed he could yet rescue the situation by swiftly knocking out Poland while maintaining a strictly defensive position vis à vis the Western Powers. The September, 1939, "War Directions" repeatedly caution the German military forces against undertaking any hostile action against Britain and France.⁵⁴ Then in the spring and summer of 1940 Hitler once again hoped to reach a compromise with Great Britain. On May 20, 1940, when it became apparent that France would not be capable of withstanding the German onslaught, General Halder made the following entry in his diary: "Wir suchen Fühlung mit England auf der Basis der Teilung der Welt."⁵⁵ That was followed in July by a "grand peace proposal" in which Hitler sought for the last time to lure Britain to the conference table.⁵⁶ It failed.

The defeat of France, moreover, led to a drastic miscalculation of German strength in relationship to that of the Soviet Union. Hitler did not have his "back free" for the war in which all of his aims came to a focus, the campaign for Lebensraum against the ideological enemy "number one", the Soviet Union.⁵⁷ Nevertheless,

so confident was the Führer after the victories in the West that even the possibility of a two front war, which he had been so determined to avoid and for which he had constantly castigated Germany's World War I leadership, no longer restrained him.

When the war against Russia began (Hitler's "own" war)⁵⁸ he, who had in 1918 decided to be a politician, once again became a soldier. So absorbed by the military aspects of the war was he that the chancellorship received only cursory and left-handed attention. Hitler was seldom found in Berlin following Germany's attack on Russia.⁵⁹ For the most part he was occupied with his generals in the "Wolfsschanze", the Führer Hauptquartier at Rastenburg, East Prussia. In contrast to the debates preceding the Western campaign of 1940, the differences of opinion between the Führer and the military "brass" in planning Operation Barbarossa⁶⁰ were of no significance. Hitler the "warlord" had built up an aura of infallibility and serious challenges to his military genius did not surface until much later.⁶¹ It was at that time also that his disdain for what had been achieved in World War I reached a new peak.

After the campaign in the East began to falter all those favourable comparisons with World War I rapidly changed. With every setback Hitler became more deeply involved in strategic and tactical questions with the result that disagreements between the Führer and his generals at times reached crisis proportions. One of the memorable clashes occurred in August 1942. Halder, having been severely chastised by Hitler for his lack of "hardness", blew his cool:

...da draussen", fuhr er, nun auch selbst höchst erregt, unter allgemeiner Spannung fort, "fallen die braven Musketiere und Leutnants zu Tausenden, nur weil die Führung nicht den einzig möglichen Entschluss durchführen darf und ihr die Hände gebunden werden." Hitler, einen Schritt zurücktretend, mass Halder mit einem langen, hasserfüllten Blick und stiess dann heiser hervor: "Generaloberst Halder, was erlauben Sie sich mir gegenüber für einen Ton. Sie wollen mir klar machen, wie es dem Mann an der Front zumute ist? Was haben Sie überhaupt an der Front erlebt? Wo waren Sie im ersten Weltkrieg? Und Sie wollen mir vorwerfen, ich verstehe die Front nicht. Ich verbitte mir das! Das ist unerhört!" Die Teilnehmer der Lagebesprechung stoben betroffen auseinander....⁶²

In virtually every serious situation now Hitler would summon forth some World War I "experience" or other to either prove a point, assert his authority or, as happened quite frequently in the latter stages of the war, make some scathing comments about his own military leaders and ultimately even about the fighting men. "Der Soldat des Ersten Weltkrieges war viel härter", he reminded his military staff on such occasions, "was mussten sie alles durchmachen, in Verdun, an der Somme. Heute würden sie bei so was davonlaufen."⁶³

Hitler did not know how to retreat, not only because he thought in terms of absolutes - "sein oder nicht sein" - but also for fear of a situation analogous to that of 1914-18. "Es war [...] mein Bestreben, von Anfang an den Krieg, wenn irgend möglich, offensiv zu führen, ihn operativ zu führen, sich nicht in eine Art Weltkriegssituation hineinmanovrieren zu lassen"; he explained in 1944, "wenn das trotzdem kam, dann hing es einfach mit dem Abfallen von Verbündeten zusammen".⁶⁴ Moreover, there could be no retreat, no no peace without victory after 1941, not for anyone who knew the nature

of the assignment given to the SS. One way or another Hitler and Goebbels impressed on the people the fact that any talk of a negotiated settlement was useless. Speer notes that by the fall of 1943 Hitler repeatedly reminded his headquarters companions: "Machen Sie sich keine Illusionen. Es gibt keit zurück. Es gibt nur ein Vorwärts. Die Brücken hinter uns sind gebrochen."⁶⁵ It had indeed become a "life or death" struggle.

Ludendorff and Hindenburg had consistently referred to World War I as a "life or death" struggle until they lost their nerve in September 1918 and pleaded for an immediate armistice. But Hitler, long after the Versailles Treaty had assured Germany its nationhood, still talked of World War I in those same terms. That could mean only one of two things: either he was tossing about propagandistic left-overs from the war years or he simply regarded the First World War as unfinished. If it did not already emerge from the years preceding 1939 that he considered 1918 a trick truce it does from those which follow. World War II was for him the last chapter of an event which began in 1914 but did not end in 1918. How else can the Führer's last testament, a document in which he revealed that his Weltanschauung had not changed in the slightest since 1919, be explained? Then too does it become apparent that when Hitler addressed the Reichstag on September 1, 1939, with these words: "Ich habe damit wieder jenen Rock angezogen, der mir einst selbst der heiligste und teuerste war. Ich werde ihn nur ausziehen nach dem Sieg, oder

ich werde dieses Ende nicht erleben!",⁶⁶ he was telling them a deep truth. It was more confession than courage. Hitler was admitting that World War I had remained the focal point of his life and that all the intervening events and experiences had not really taught him anything, in short, that he was still frozen in adolescence.⁶⁷ Hitler could only think in absolute terms: friend or foe, being or non-being, life or death, victory or annihilation. These mutually excluding alternatives are indicative of a mind that had not yet developed the capacity for coming to terms with the multiple shades of grey in the world and its history. Hitler's single-minded pursuit of the same enemy from 1919 to 1945 is not so much a reflection of a changeless enemy as a portrait of the petrified state of his own mind. He had opened his political career with a volley of abuse against the Jews, the "wirepullers of human destiny", and closed it with the same.⁶⁸ Now the self-fulfilling prophecy Hitler held forth on the eve of World War II also falls into place as the link between the Alpha and Omega of his political beliefs: "Wenn es dem internationalen Finanzjudentum in und ausserhalb Europas gelingen sollte, die Völker noch einmal in einen Weltkrieg zu stürzen, dann wird das Ergebnis nicht die Bolschewierung der Erde und damit der Sieg des Judentums sein, sondern die Vernichtung der jüdischen Rasse in Europa."⁶⁹ Here both the fear of Bolshevism and the will to tear out its roots, the twin forces which drove Hitler forward, are inextricably interwoven. And

although these words were spoken at a time when the political options open to National Socialist Germany were at a maximum the premise upon which his intentions ultimately rested was as narrow as it had been in 1919. .

Hitler's struggle to uproot and banish from history a part of history even led him to have France sign the armistice of June, 1940, in the very same railway car which had been used by Joch to dictate the terms of the armistice to the German delegation on November 11, 1918. The old restaurant car was moved from its place in a Paris museum to the spot in the Forest of Compiègne, north-east of Paris, on which it had stood in 1918.⁷⁰ It was more than contempt for this place that motivated the Führer to carry out that ceremony in the same spot which had witnessed the end of World War I, it symbolized instead his will to obliterate a part of the past.

On November 8, 1941, Hitler, standing on the pinnacle of European political and military power, articulated what had been symbolized in the Forest of Compiègne before his followers in Munich. It was the anniversary both of the November Revolution in Germany and the 1923 Hitler-Ludendorff Putsch, a day on which he traditionally reviewed the broad course of events:

Allein, es ist der alte, ewige Streit und alte, ewige Kampf. Er fand eben im Jahre 1918 kein Ende. Damals hat man uns um den Sieg betrogen, damals haben wir zwei Millionen Tote geopfert, über 7 1/2 Millionen Verwundete gehabt und sind trotzdem durch den Wahnwitz einer inneren Revolution um den Sieg gebracht worden. Es war aber nur der Anfang, das erste Stück dieses Dramas, das zweite und der Schluss werden jetzt geschrieben,

und wir werden diesmal nun das einholen, um was man uns damals betrogen hat. Punkt um Punkt und Position um Position wird jetzt wider in Rechnung gestellt und einkassiert werden.⁷¹

Then, almost as if he felt guilty for having survived World War I, Hitler concluded: "Es wird die Stunde kommen, da wir auch vor die Gräber der Gefallenen des grossen Krieges hintreten und sagen werden können: Kameraden, auch ihr seid nicht umsonst gefallen".⁷²

When it became apparent that his iron determination to overcome 1918 could not be achieved in a positive sense, i.e., in victory, Hitler resolved that death and destruction were to be preferred to surrender - Germany would never capitulate! His adamant refusal to withdraw from Stalingrad, even though the Sixth Army there faced utter and complete annihilation, was the first serious indication that Hitler's references to the war as a struggle which would determine the existence or non-existence of Germany was far more than mere rhetoric. Repeated catastrophes on every front resulted in no new political or military strategy, only a grim, fanatical, tenacious hanging-on till the inevitable end.

Hitler's fundamental inability to retreat, much less admit defeat, betrays the nature of the origins of National Socialism as clearly as it describes its demise. National Socialism emerged from a defeat which it radically refused to accept and thus its destiny was always linked to war. Only force could challenge and finally break the umbilical cord between Hitler and his

metaphorical mother, World War I. The position which he had meanwhile achieved in Europe, however, turned that confrontation into a conflagration of global dimensions.

"Never Another 1918!"

¹On April 5, 1940, Goebbels, in a secret statement before invited representatives of the German press said of National Socialist foreign policy, "es handelt sich heute Zug um Zug nur um die Wiederholung eines Vorganges, den wir schon einmal erlebt haben. Wir führen heute in Europa die gleiche Revolution durch, die wir im kleineren Masstab in Deutschland durchgeführt haben. Sie hat sich nur in den Dimensionen geändert. Die Grundsätze, Erfahrungen und Methoden von damals sind auch heute geltend. Sie haben auch zwischen Völkern Gültigkeit." (Jacobsen, Der Zweite Weltkrieg, p. 180).

²Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 3, p. 214.

³Hitler's Zweites Buch. Ein Dokument aus dem Jahre 1928, (Stuttgart, 1961).

⁴Ibid., pp. 70 f.

⁵Mein Kampf, p. 649.

⁶Ibid., p. 651.

⁷Ibid., p. 654.

⁸Ibid., p. 655.

⁹Ibid., p. 618 f.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 620. Also Hitler's Zweites Buch, pp. 176, f.

¹¹Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 10, pp. 371-373.

¹²David Lloyd George visited Hitler on September 4, 1936. (Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 11, pp. 387-389.)

¹³Ausgewählte Dokumente - Kommentare, p. 88.

¹⁴Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 10, pp. 534-542. The contents of that memorandum were known only to Göring and Blomberg.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 534-535.

¹⁶Joseph Goebbels, Der Bolschewismus in Theorie und Praxis.
Rede auf dem Parteikongress in Nürnberg 1936 (Munich, 1936),
p. 30.

¹⁷Reden des Führers am Parteitag der Arbeit 1937 (Munich, 1938), p. 81.

¹⁸Walter Hofer, Der Nationalsozialismus: Dokumente 1933-1945 (Frankfurt, 1957), pp. 193-196.

¹⁹A. von Kotze and H. Krausnick eds., Es spricht der Führer, (Gütersloh, 1966), pp. 260 f.

²⁰Goebbels gave unambiguous expression to this concept of military superiority on April 5, 1940: "Wir glauben blind an den deutschen Sieg. Günstigere Chancen haben wir niemals gehabt und werden wir nie wieder bekommen. Wenn man meint, wir sind nicht ganz fertig gewesen, so muss man beachten, dass Fertigsein ein gradueller Begriff ist. Fertig ist die Nation, die sich am stärksten vom Fertigsein des Gegners unterscheidet. In diesem Sinne waren wir fertig. Eine stärkere Differenz wird es nicht mehr geben." (Jacobsen, Der Zweite Weltkrieg, p. 181).

²¹Albert Speer, Erinnerungen (Berlin, 1969), p. 120.

²²Ibid.

²³Hitler's speech at the Nuremberg Party Congress, September 13, 1937. Domarus, vol. I, pp. 726 f.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 10, p. 114.

²⁶Ibid., vol. 11, pp.

²⁷Maschmann, fazit, p. 11.

²⁸Hans-Jochen Gamm, Der Braune Kult, Das Dritte Reich und seine Ersatzreligion, (Hamburg, 1962), pp. 114 f.

²⁹Bullock, p. 547. Cf. also Kriegspropaganda 1939-1941: Geheime Ministerkonferenzen im Reichspropagandaministerium, Willi A. Boelcke, ed., (Stuttgart, 1966), p. 188.

³⁰Domarus, vol. II, p. 1603. Cf. also Percy E. Schramm ed., Hitler's Tischgespräche, (Stuttgart, 1963), p. 465: "Beim Mittagessen am 22. [7.1942] wies der Chef darauf hin, dass dieser Krieg ein getreuer Abklatsch der Verhältnisse der Kampfzeit sei. Was sich damals bei uns als Kampf der Parteien im Inneren vollzogen habe, vollziehe sich heute als Kampf der Nationen draussen. Ebenso wie die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD) in der Kampfzeit, sei heute die UDSSR der Sturmblock, während die kapitalistischen Staaten ebenso wie die damaligen bürgerlichen Parteien ihr Debüt am Rande geben".

³¹Nolte, Der Faschismus, p. 283.

³²Ibid., p. 332.

³³Ibid., p. 363.

³⁴Carl Burckhardt, Meine Danziger Mission 1937-1939 (Munich, 1960), p. 348.

³⁵Erhard Klöss, ed., Reden des Führers: Politik und Propaganda Adolf Hitlers 1922-1945. (Munich, 1967), pp. 208 f. The origins of the "Never another 1918" slogan go back to Hitler's speech in the

Berlin Sportpalast on the eve of the Munich Agreement. After the Führer had warned the world that he would henceforth go before his people as their first soldier and that he would be followed by a different people from that of 1918, Goebbels apparently jumped to his feet and shouted: "one thing is sure: 1918 will never be repeated!" According to William Shirer, the American broadcaster, this had a profound impact on Hitler: "Hitler looked up at him, as if those were the words which he had been searching for all the evening. He leapt to his feet and, with a fanatical fire in his eyes that I shall never forget, brought his right hand, after a grand sweep, pounding down on the power in his lungs: "Ja"! Then he slumped into his chair exhausted". (Bullock, p. 463).

³⁶Mein Kampf, p. 679.

³⁷Buchheim, Martin Broszat, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, Helmut Krausnick, eds., vol. II, Anatomie des SS-Staates - Gutachten des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte, (Freiburg, 1965), p. 97 f.

³⁸"Hitler über die Justiz - Ein Tischgespräch"; Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte, vol. 12 (1964), p. 96.

³⁹Jochmann, p. 71. Also Nolte, Der Faschismus, p. 318 f.

⁴⁰Ursachen und Folgen, vol. 11, pp. 25-26.

⁴¹Harold C. Deutsch, The Conspiracy against Hitler in the Twilight War (Minneapolis, 1968), pp. 177 f.

⁴²Nolte, Der Faschismus, p. 359 f.

⁴³Ibid., p. 360.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵ Speer, p. 229.

⁴⁶ Walther Hubatsch, ed., Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegsführung 1939-1945: Dokumente des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht (Munich, dtv. 1965), p. 20.

⁴⁷ Andreas Hillgruber, Hitlers Strategie-Politik und Kriegsführung 1940-1941 (Frankfurt, 1965), p. 570.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 33 f.

⁴⁹ A thorough examination of the relationship between the German economy and Hitler's military strategy has been done by A.S. Milward, The German Economy at War (London, 1965).

⁵⁰ Hillgruber, p. 45. Production of arms reached its peak only in 1944, that is to say, when it was, from a military point of view, too late. (Speer, p. 225).

⁵¹ Hitler's Secret Conversations, p. 42 f.

⁵² Domarus, vol. II, pp. 1604-5.

⁵³ Lothar Gruchmann, Der Zweite Weltkrieg, (Munich, 1967), p. 16.

⁵⁴ Hitler's Weisungen für die Kriegsführung, p. 30 f.

⁵⁵ Jacobsen, ed., Franz Halder, Kriegstagebuch: Tägliche Aufzeichnungen des Chefs des Generalstabes des Heeres 1939-1942. (Stuttgart, 1962-1964), p. 308. General Jodl made a similar statement in his diary: "Die Engländer könnten jederzeit Sonderfrieden haben nach Rückgabe der Kolonien". (Hillgruber, p. 145).

⁵⁶ Domarus, vol. II, pp. 1540 f.

⁵⁷ Hillgruber, pp. 208-210.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 211.

⁵⁹ Helmut Heiber ed. Lagebesprechungen im Führerhauptquartier:

Protokollfragmente aus Hitlers militärischen Konferenzen 1942-1945 (Stuttgart, 1962), p. 25.

⁶⁰Barbarossa was the code name for the campaign against Russia.

⁶¹Hillgruber, p. 210 f.

⁶²Walter Warlimont, Im Hauptquartier der deutschen Wehrmacht 1939-1945 (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 263.

⁶³Speer, p. 318.

⁶⁴Lagebesprechungen, p. 281 f.

⁶⁵Speer, p. 306.

⁶⁶Reden des Führers, p. 215.

⁶⁷Ernst Nolte convincingly argues that the dominant trait in Hitler's personality was infantilism (Three Faces of Fascism, p. 288 f).

⁶⁸Domarus, vol. II, pp. 2236-41.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 1058.

⁷⁰Bullock, p. 590.

⁷¹Domarus, vol. II, p. 1781.

⁷²Ibid.

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